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ABSTRACT

The Program Status Research Study examined the status of local programs for students with high abilities and reasons given by key personnel for program status. A mail survey to 2,900 local personnel in 19 states (divided into four groups according to economic health and the existence or non-existence of a state mandate to provide services) yielded a response rate of 54 percent. Analysis indicated that programs in states with mandates and in good economic health are "intact" and "expanded," while programs in all other groups are being "threatened," "reduced," and "eliminated" in high numbers. Respondents attributed intact programs to the existence of a state mandate and advocacy efforts and threatened programs to a decline in state and local funds. Respondents indicated that 75 percent of high ability students in grades 3-8 receive program services, 50 percent in grades 1-2 and 9-12, receive similar services, but program services for students at the Pre-K to K level were almost nonexistent. Interviews with four key personnel from each state confirmed the main reasons given by survey respondents for variations in program status. Six guidelines with accompanying research support are offered, including, among others: (1) maintenance of advocacy efforts in states with good economic health and mandates; (2) increase of advocacy efforts in states with poor economic health and/or where mandates do not exist; and (3) focus of advocacy efforts on policy makers at the state government level. Appendices include the survey and exemplary policy statements of school boards. (Contains 60 references.) (DB)

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Dr. Jeanne H. Purcell is a research analyst for The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. Prior to her work at The National Research Center, she was a classroom teacher for twenty years. During the last ten years of her teaching career, she implemented and coordinated a program for high ability students at the elementary and secondary levels. Her interests include the role of gifted education in the reform movement and talented women. She has published several articles which have appeared in *Roeper Review*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, and *Gifted Child Quarterly*. In 1993 she was awarded the John Gowan Outstanding Graduate student award by the National Association for Gifted Children.

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ABSTRACT

The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993), sponsored by The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, was designed to examine the status of local programs for students with high abilities and the reasons to which educators and key personnel attributed the status of these programs. The study was completed in a purposive sample of 19 states, divided into four groups according to economic health (i.e., good, poor) and the existence or nonexistence of a state mandate to provide program services. This descriptive ex post facto research was completed in two phases. Phase I, a mail survey to more than 2,900 local personnel that yielded a response rate of over 54%, was designed to assess the status of programs for students with high abilities and the reasons attributed by local personnel to the status of their programs. Phase II, interviews with key personnel (the state director of gifted education, the president of the state advocacy organization, a school superintendent, a chairperson of a local board of education) was designed to triangulate the findings from Phase I.

Results from Phase I indicated that programs in states with mandates and in good economic health are "intact" and "expanded," while programs in all other groups are being "threatened," "reduced," and "eliminated" in high numbers. The majority of respondents from states with mandates to provide services to students with high abilities and who reported programs as intact or expanded attributed the status to the existence of a state mandate and advocacy efforts. Almost half of the respondents from states without mandates and reporting their status as reduced, threatened, or eliminated attributed this status to a decline in state and local funds. Additionally, respondents indicated that approximately 75% of students with high abilities in grades three to eight receive program services, that 50% of students in grades one to two and nine to twelve receive similar services, and that program services for students Pre-K to K were almost nonexistent. Results from key personnel in Phase II of the research triangulated the findings from Phase I. Advocacy efforts were most frequently associated by key personnel with programs that were intact or expanding, and reductions in funding were associated with programs experiencing jeopardy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Conflicting opinions exist among researchers and experts in the field of gifted education regarding the current status of programs for students with high abilities. Many of today's researchers in the education of the gifted and talented (Dettmer, 1993; Feldman, 1991; Parker & Karnes, 1991) would testify to the validity of the predictions made 10 to 15 years ago (DeLeon & Vandenbos, 1985; Jackson, 1979; Tannenbaum, 1979). These predictions were best summarized by Passow (1979), who believed the future for highly able students was "brighter than it has been in the long history of concern for society's most able and talented individuals" (p. 456). Contemporary leaders also cite significant progress for the field including, for example: legislation for the gifted, increases in the number of institutions of higher education offering special courses in the education of the gifted, increases in the number of publications and research efforts in the field, and funding through the Javits Act. Dettmer (1993), discussing the unparalleled opportunities for educators of the gifted in this time of reform, concludes, "The gifted education vessel, bobbed about in the choppy, unpredictable, sometimes stormy waters for many years, ...has gathered momentum in the past decade" (p. 94). After examining national surveys to determine the number of degree programs in gifted and talented education and gifted education centers, Parker and Karnes (1991) conclude: "These figures reflect an encouraging surge of interest in the education of the gifted among institutions of higher learning" (p. 44). Feldman (1991) argues that a new wave of interest in the education of students with high abilities is underway. Using Kuhn's (1970) model for scientific revolutions, Feldman cites a number of new features that are changing the "moribund" (p. 14) state of the field. These features include: the acknowledgment of new, multiple forms of intelligence, the use and preference for developmental theories of giftedness, identification of gifted and talented individuals based on performance rather than on tests, a new focus on excellence rather than elitism, an emphasis on the context as a means for nurturing giftedness, and an emphasis on collaboration rather than top down administrative models for programs. Based on the new emerging paradigms within the field, Feldman concludes, "One feels an explosion of power and energy building in the field" (p. 15).

While many experts argue for advances in the field at the national level and at institutions of higher learning, a smaller, but increasing number of researchers and journalists are not convinced that a new wave of interest in the education of the gifted and talented actually exists. These authors disagree with the paradigm shift theorists and are more cautious in their outlook about the future of gifted education. They cite at least three forces which are causing a reduction in the number and scope of some programs at the local level: the recent national economic decline, misconceptions about the special needs of students identified as gifted and talented, and the effect of prevailing reform efforts and resultant policy decisions at the local level.

Reasons Attributed to the Decline of Programs for Students With High Abilities

Journalists, experts, and researchers cite the recent economic crisis as a major reason for the reduction of programs for the gifted. Radin (1991), Kelly (1991), and Marcus (1992) chronicle the decline in the number of programs for the gifted in the Northeast and argue that economic factors have precipitated the reduction. Radin's front-page article in *The Boston Globe* concludes that "Education for the brightest public school students in New England is falling far behind what is offered their peers in other parts of the country" (p. 1). Kelly, in *USA Today*, claims that programs for the gifted "have suffered varying fates, suffering mostly where economies are poor" (p. 18). Marcus, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, concludes that programs for students with high abilities are "the early casualties of budget-cutting" (p. 3). Valerie Seaberg, former president of the Council of State Directors, believes that *The 1990 State of the States Gifted and Talented Education Report* documented an increase in overall state funding for programs between 1987-1990 (Kelly, 1991, p. 18). However, she believes that "the 1990 survey was conducted before it could measure the impact of state cuts brought on by the recession" (Kelly, 1991, p. 18). Purcell (1992) conducted a survey of local gifted and talented programs in Connecticut, 1989-1991. The results indicated a 16% increase between the school year 1989-1990 and 1990-1991 in the number of programs that were either eliminated, reduced, or threatened with elimination and/or reduction. One hundred percent of respondents reporting programs in jeopardy attributed the difficulty to fiscal constraints.

Singal (1991) and Feldhusen (1989) believe that the reduction in programs for the gifted may be due to a misunderstanding about the special needs of students identified as gifted. Feldhusen argues that the public will continue to ignore the needs of high ability students because of misconceptions about their needs and that, as a result, more capable students will begin to "systematically demotivate" (p. 58). Singal calls the most able students in America "forgotten victims" of the national education system and suggests that programs for the gifted receive "no more than token interest" (p. 67).

Slavin (in Manuel, 1992), Sapon-Shevin (in Manuel, 1992; Sapon-Shevin, 1994), and Renzulli and Reis (1991) attribute the decline of programs for the gifted to the effects of the reform movement, specifically the elimination of grouping practices. Robert Slavin and Mara Sapon-Shevin, advocates for heterogeneous grouping, believe that gifted programs are elitist, have no effect on achievement and can be "racially motivated" (Sapon-Shevin, quoted in Manuel, 1992, p. 37). Both Slavin and Sapon-Shevin argue for the continued elimination of tracking and ability grouping, including programs for the gifted. They suggest the return to heterogeneous grouping is now a "coast to coast movement" (Slavin, as quoted in Manuel, 1992, p. 37) that is in the best interest of all children, including the gifted, and accordingly, these researchers attribute the decline in the number of local gifted and talented programs to policy decisions by local boards of education in support of heterogeneous grouping practices. Sapon-Shevin also contends that programs for high potential students have become safety valves and function to maintain dysfunctional school systems. More specifically, to escape the pressures of vocal and influential parents in large urban districts, school personnel place "doctors' kids, lawyers' kids and professors' kids" in programs for high ability students to avoid the cost of restructuring whole school systems (Sapon-Shevin, 1994). Renzulli and Reis (1991), nationally known experts in the education of the gifted, also believe the reform movement is causing a decline in the number of programs for the gifted and talented offered at the local level. "We believe that the field of education for the gifted and

talented is currently facing a quiet crisis...one that is knocking its victims [programs] off one at a time... and that in many ways this crisis is directly related to the educational reform movement in America" (p. 26).

Clearly, those who believe that the field of gifted education is experiencing a retrenchment attribute a variety of reasons to the field's declining status. Viadero (1992), in a recent front-page story in *Education Week*, reported on this complexity of beliefs, and concluded, "For the time being, though, advocates and gifted educators say it is too soon to tell how much of the retrenchment in gifted-education programs is the result of changing educational philosophies and how much is the result of the weakened economy" (p. 1, 14 & 15). In light of the anecdotal evidence, an empirical investigation was undertaken to examine the status of programs for high ability students and determine the factors that contributed to their retention and elimination.

Methods

Research Design

This study used a descriptive ex post facto research design to address the three research questions which guided the study:

1. What is the current status (i.e., expanded; reduced; eliminated; threatened with reduction and/or elimination, but intact; intact) of programs for high ability students in a purposive sample of 19 states?
2. To what causes do local representatives from school systems attribute the current status of programs for students with high abilities?
3. What is the perception of key respondents* from the same 19 states regarding which factors** led to the elimination or retention of programs for these students?

Research questions 1 and 2 were examined in Phase I of the study, which took place between February, 1992 and September, 1992. Research question 3 was examined during the second phase of the research, which took place between October and December, 1992.

Phase I

Nineteen states were selected for the study using purposive sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 67) to facilitate comparisons among four groups of states: those in good economic health with laws and regulations which mandate services for students with high abilities (Group 1-Alaska, Florida, Utah, Virginia), those in good economic health, but without a mandate (Group 2-Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada), those in poor economic health with a mandate (Group 3-Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Oregon, West Virginia), and those in poor economic health without a mandate (Group 4-Connecticut,

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* Key respondents include: state directors, heads of state parent organizations for students with high abilities, school superintendents, and chairpersons of boards of education.

** Factors include: policy, economic conditions, and misunderstandings regarding the needs of students with high abilities.

Delaware, North Dakota, New Mexico***, Wyoming). In Phase I, The Advocacy Survey was sent to over 2,900 local personnel in the selected states who were responsible for programs for high ability students. The survey asked for three categories of information including: the status of the programs (i.e., expanded; reduced; eliminated; threatened with reduction and/or elimination, but intact; intact), the primary reason associated with the status of programs, and the comprehensiveness of programs, Pre-K to Grade 12. With respect to the reasons associated with program status, respondents were asked to select from different sets of reasons, depending upon the status of their district's program. Specifically, respondents whose programs were expanded or intact were asked to select from the following reasons: existence of a state mandate to provide services, active support from advocacy groups, increased state funding or increased local funding. Respondents whose programs were jeopardized in some way (i.e., threatened, reduced, eliminated) were asked to select from the following reasons: lack of a state mandate, reduction in state funding, reduction in local funding, lack of administrative support, lack of sufficient advocacy efforts, policy decisions resulting from educational reform issues, misunderstandings about the needs of the gifted.

Phase II

The second phase of this descriptive ex post facto research examined research question 3: the perceptions of key respondents (i.e., state directors, heads of state parent organizations for students with high abilities, school superintendents, chairpersons of boards of education) from the same 19 states regarding factors (e.g., policy, economic conditions, the reform movement) that led to the retention and elimination of programs for high ability students. The subjects for this phase of the research included four people from each state who held leadership positions with respect to the education of able students: the state director of gifted and talented education, the president of a state organization of parents of students with high abilities, a school superintendent, and a chairperson of a board of education. The first two key personnel listed above had a vested interest in the education of high ability students. The latter two key personnel did not have a vested interest in any particular group of students (e.g., learning disabled, students with high abilities, students with limited English proficiency).

Between October and December, 1992, telephone interviews with key personnel were conducted. Not all key personnel were interviewed in this phase of the research because consistent repetition in the data occurred after 32 interviews were conducted. To verify that data saturation had been reached, four additional interviews were conducted in Nevada.

Conclusions

Phase I

Program Status. The data indicated that approximately three-fourths of programs from Group 1 were expanded or intact and this is encouraging news in light of the recent national economic decline (Diegmueller, 1992a; Diegmueller, 1992b). However,

*** New Mexico, believed by many respondents to be without a mandate to provide services to high ability students, does have a mandate requiring educational services for these students. Because it was believed that the data from respondents in New Mexico would mask the findings from Group 4, the data were analyzed twice. The data sets were similar and, accordingly, a decision was made to retain the data from respondents in New Mexico.

programs from Group 2 and Group 4, as well as programs, mandates and mandate initiatives in Group 3, were being threatened, reduced, and eliminated in high numbers. These findings differ from the claim of researchers (Dettmer, 1993; Feldman, 1991; Parker & Karnes, 1991) who cite significant progress for the field in specific areas. Dettmer (1991) suggests that the field "has gathered momentum" (p. 94) in the last decade. Feldman argues that a new wave of interest in the education of students with high abilities is underway and that one can feel "an explosion of power and energy building in the field" (p. 15). Simply put, the majority of respondents from the sample of 19 states did not report a "resurgence of interest," "an explosion of power," or the beginning of a new wave of interest in the education of students with high abilities. It is believed that the difference between the present findings related to the status of local programs and the theories about the current status of the field by Dettmer (1993), Parker and Karnes (1991), and Feldman (1991) exist because the latter theories were based upon events which occurred at institutions of higher learning (e.g., an increase in the number of scholarly research publications about students with high abilities, increased enrollment in courses and at national conferences focusing on these students) and at the federal level (i.e., increased money allocated to grants related to students with high abilities). The present study is based on events that occurred at the local level to programs. Accordingly, the current findings are not contradictory; they present a new and different picture of what is happening in the field at the local level.

Primary Reason Associated With Program Status. Two sets of patterns emerged from the data related to the reasons attributed by respondents to program status. The first set of patterns was associated with responses from states *with* mandates to provide services to high ability students. Similar response patterns emerged from all respondents in these categories of states who reported programs as intact or expanded. Fifty-six percent of respondents in Group 1 and 68% of respondents in Group 3 attributed program growth or stability to the existence of a state mandate, and 26% in each group attributed advocacy efforts as the primary reason for the current program status. Put simply, respondents indicated that state mandates, regardless of state economic health, are most associated with program growth and stability. Decline of state and local financial support was the primary reason associated with programs experiencing jeopardy (i.e., threatened, reduced, or eliminated). Other factors, including decisions resulting from reform issues, did not feature prominently in the data from respondents in these two categories of states.

The second set of patterns related to the reasons attributed to program status emerged from states *without* mandates to provide services to students with high abilities. About half of the respondents, 46%, in these two categories of states (Group 2 and Group 4) who identified programs as expanded or intact attributed this status to advocacy efforts. Without state mandates to ensure program stability, respondents believed that the efforts of support groups contributed most to program growth and stability. Reduction in funding was the primary reason attributed by the majority of respondents in Group 2 and Group 4 to programs that were threatened, reduced, or eliminated. Forty-eight percent of respondents in Group 2 and 41% of respondents in Group 4 attributed their jeopardized status to a reduction in state and local funds. With the exception of 43% of respondents in Group 4 who attributed their jeopardized status to the lack of a state mandate, none of the other reasons listed were attributed to program status by a significant portion of local personnel.

To summarize, whereas respondents in states with mandates attributed the stability and expansion of programs to the existence of a state mandate, respondents in states without mandates attributed the stability and growth of programs to support from advocacy efforts. A large percentage of respondents in all 19 states attributed the

jeopardy experienced by programs to the decline of funding at the state and local level for programs that provide services for students with high abilities. Other reasons, including policy decisions resulting from reform issues, did not feature prominently in the data when viewed across the categories of states.

Slavin (in Manuel, 1992) argued that programs for students with high abilities are being eliminated from "coast to coast" (p. 37) due to policy decisions related to grouping and tracking issues. Sapon-Shevin (in Manuel, 1992; Sapon-Shevin, 1994) argued that programs for high ability students are racially motivated and suggested that programs are being eliminated for this reason. The present research simply does not support either of these claims; the majority of respondents to The Advocacy Survey did not perceive that programs were being eliminated because of policy decisions related to reform issues, nor did the majority of respondents believe that programs were racially motivated and were being eliminated on the grounds of racial bias. The majority of respondents believed that the existence and nonexistence of state mandates, reductions in local and state funds, and advocacy efforts contributed to their current status.

Comprehensiveness of Programs, Pre-K to Grade 12. The data indicate that states without mandates and with poor economies not only provided fewer programs, but also served fewer grade levels in districts where programs exist. Over 80% of districts in Group 1 provided services to students in twelve grade levels (grades one through twelve); only 60% of districts from states in Group 4 provided programs and these programs, on average, served only three grade levels (grades four through six). A similar pattern existed between Group 1 and Group 4 with respect to the services in the pre-primary, primary, and secondary grade levels. Sixty-three percent of districts in Group 1 provided services to students Pre-K to grade 2, while only 31% of districts provided services in the same grades from Group 4. With respect to the secondary years, 80% of districts in Group 1 provided services to students in high school; only 32% of districts in Group 4 provided similar services. While it is clear that a majority of upper elementary and middle school students are receiving services in districts where program services are available, districts in the present sample are not providing comprehensive services for students at either end of their public school experience. In spite of the literature which indicates that very young, high ability learners can be identified and served (Robinson, 1987, 1993; Roedell, Jackson, & Robinson, 1980), young students in this sample are not being served. Quite simply, districts without services for this group are missing the opportunity to identify and nurture their high ability students in important, formative years. Furthermore, in spite of researchers (Callahan, 1979; Leroux, 1986; Maker, 1982; Passow, 1986; Reis, 1987; Renzulli & Reis, 1985; Willings, 1986) who argue for the need for differentiated educational and counseling services beyond those provided in the comprehensive high school, half of the high ability, secondary school students in this sample may not be provided with sufficient stimulation.

Phase II

Two important findings emerged from Phase II of The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993). First, data from key personnel related to the factors which contribute to program stability and growth confirmed the data provided by local personnel in Phase I of the research. Specifically, key personnel (Phase II) most frequently attributed advocacy efforts to program stability and growth, as did 46% of local personnel (Phase I) from states in Group 2 and Group 4 (states without mandates to provide services to high ability students). Second, key personnel (Phase II) most frequently attributed a reduction in financial support to threatened, reduced, and eliminated programs, thereby supporting the findings from local personnel. Thirty-nine percent of key personnel and almost half of local personnel, across all categories of states,

attributed the jeopardized status of programs to reductions in state and local funds. The consistency with which over 1600 respondents in Phase I and Phase II of the present research associated funding issues with program jeopardy casts additional doubt on theories which claim that programs for students with high abilities are being eliminated solely because of racial bias and/or decisions related to educational reform, specifically the grouping issue. It seems reasonable to conclude from the data that the national retrenchment in gifted education is, for the most part, the result of a weakened economy and not the result of changing educational philosophies.

Guidelines and Research Support

The following are guidelines which can be drawn from data provided by The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993). It is important to note that the data represent findings from the 19 states sampled, and accordingly may provide a slightly different picture than if all 50 states had been surveyed.

Guideline 1: Advocacy efforts in states in good economic health with mandates need to be maintained.

Research Support: Programs for high ability students in states in good economic health with state mandates to provide services to students with high ability are, for the most part, stable and expanding.

Guideline 2: Advocacy efforts need to be increased in states in poor economic health and/or where mandates do not exist. Advocacy for high ability students must occur with classroom teachers, building administrators, local board of education members, and legislators and executive officers at the state level.

Research Support: Programs for students with high abilities in states in all other categories are being threatened, reduced, and eliminated in higher numbers. Key personnel triangulated this finding; three-fourths of them believed that the future of programs for high ability students was unstable and/or likely to be jeopardized.

Guideline 3: Advocates for high ability children who want to maintain state mandates need to direct a large proportion of their efforts toward policy makers in the legislative and executive branches of their state government.

Research Support: The reason most frequently associated with stable and expanding programs by local personnel in states *with* mandates was the existence of a state mandate.

Guideline 4: Advocates in states without mandates need to direct their efforts toward policy makers.

Research Support: The reason most associated with program stability and expansion in states *without* mandates was advocacy. Four levels of advocacy should be maintained: the classroom level with teachers, the building level with administrators, the local or district level with board of education members, and the state level with policy makers in the legislative and executive branches of government. Regardless of the group targeted for lobbying efforts, the following strategies, carefully planned and orchestrated by interested parents, teachers and/or students, have proven effective: personal letters, group-sponsored letters, personalized information packets, newsletters, newspaper editorials, letters to the editor, news articles, petitions, personal phone conversations, personal visits or meetings, small group meetings, radio or TV talk shows, press breakfasts, and/or luncheons.

Guideline 5: Decisions to modify or eliminate programs for high achieving students should be based on (1) research and (2) a thorough analysis of the effectiveness of a program at the school and district level. Decisions regarding the status of programs should not be based on trends which may not be supported by research.

Research Support: The reason most frequently attributed to program jeopardy across all local and key personnel was reduction in funding at the state and local level. For the most part, the reform movement was not cited as a reason for the retrenchment in programs for high ability students.

Guideline 6: Policy makers need to plan and articulate more comprehensive services for children with high abilities.

Research Support: Districts with programs for high ability students do not provide comprehensive (Pre-K-12) services.

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The Status of Programs for High Ability Students

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Introduction

Since the turn of the century two peaks of interest (Tannenbaum, 1983) have characterized the nation's concern for children with high abilities. The first period of interest occurred after the launching of Sputnik in 1957 which caused Americans to fear that the nation was losing its technological and competitive edge. The fear galvanized federal legislators to improve educational opportunities for all students, especially the highly able, and congressional members appropriated almost one billion dollars to fund the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The second wave of interest occurred fifteen years later when the Marland Report was issued in 1972. The report's bleak findings about the inadequate educational provisions for and misunderstandings about highly able students prompted another flurry of interest and the appropriation of additional federal funds. However, the federal funding during the second wave of interest amounted to only a fraction of the federal funds allocated under the NDEA. In 1978, 2.56 million dollars was allocated under The Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act of 1978.

Currently, disagreement exists among experts, researchers, and journalists regarding the extent of concern and commitment related to the education of students with high abilities. Some believe the field is at the threshold of renewed interest; others believe that the field is facing a crisis in which programs for students with high abilities are being eliminated in states across the nation. Not only do experts, journalists, and educators disagree about the status of programs for these students, but they also disagree with respect to the nature of the reason(s) to attribute to current program status. Reasons mentioned by these persons include: economic factors, the effects of the reform movement, the existence or nonexistence of state mandates, and misconceptions regarding the needs of high ability students.

Accordingly, the purpose of this research was twofold: (1) to determine from local personnel the status of programs for high ability students and the reasons they attribute to the status of their district's program, and (2) to determine from key personnel (i.e., state directors of education for high ability students, heads of state parents' advocacy groups for high ability children, school superintendents, chairpersons of boards of education) which factors lead to the elimination and retention of programs for these students.

Historical Overview

The 1980s

Experts, educators, and advocates for students with high abilities ushered in the decade of the 1980s with great expectations, in large part as a result of the flurry of federal and state initiatives on behalf of the gifted a decade earlier. Researchers and experts in the field believed that the 1980s held great promise for these students. DeLeon and VandenBos (1985) reported the future to be "bright" (p. 422) for highly capable

children. Tannenbaum (1979) considered the revival of interest in the gifted as a "sign of initiatives" (p. 26). Jackson (1979) argued that the developments of the 1970s inspired "cautious optimism on the part of those who have long considered the gifted and talented as the neglected stepchild of the educational system" (p. 62). Passow (1979) viewed the growing commitment to the education of students with high abilities as a sign that the future for these students would be "brighter than it has been in the long history of concern for society's most able and talented individuals" (p. 456). As late as the end of the decade, Reis (1989) reported continued progress for these students, and documented advances with a number of indicators, including: the increase in the number of graduate programs for teachers of the gifted, increases in the number of textbooks about the gifted, the rising number of parent advocacy groups, the increasing numbers of high ability students being served across the nation, the swelling numbers in attendance at national conventions, and the increasingly rigorous demand for quality by professional journals in the field.

The mood at the end of the decade, however, began to change. Ironically, it was Tannenbaum (1979), the theorist and practitioner who had earlier seen "signs of initiatives" for the highly able, who foreshadowed what began happening to some programs for students with high abilities in many states as the 1980s ended. As early as the 1970s, Tannenbaum described programs as having "experienced hard times and sometimes drastic cutbacks." "Programs for the gifted," he said, "are usually the most expendable ones when budgetary considerations force cutbacks in services to children" (p. 26).

Fiscal constraints tightened considerably in the late 1980s (deCourcy-Hinds & Eckholm, 1990) and was due, in large part, to an historic shift in federal relations with states and cities. Federal grants, which had blossomed under President Johnson's "great society" and peaked in the late 1970s, were eliminated by President Reagan who transferred increasing responsibility to the states for the cost of social programs. "As federal grants waned, the share of total state and local spending paid for by Washington declined from a peak of 25% in the late 70s to 17% now" (deCourcy-Hinds & Eckholm, p. L-17).

This shift had been foreshadowed by the platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties in the 1980 presidential election.

> The Democratic party is strongly committed to education as the best hope for America's future. We applaud the leadership taken by a Democratic President and a Democratic Congress in strengthening federal programs for education. In the past four years: Federal aid to education has increased 73%-the greatest income increases in such a short period in our history. Over the next four years, we pledge to continue our strong commitment to education. We will continue to support the Department of Education and assist in its all important educational enterprise that involves three out of ten Americans. (Congressional Record, 1980, cited by DeLeon & VandenBos, 1985, p. 414)

The Republican platform stood in sharp contrast:

> Next to religious training and the home, education is the most important means by which families hand down to each new generation their ideals and beliefs. It is a pillar of a free society. But today, parents are losing control of their children's schooling...Because federal assistance should help local school districts, not tie them up in red tape, we will strive to replace the crazy quilt of wasteful programs with a system of block grants that will restore decision-making to local officials

> responsible to voters and parents...and encourage(s) the elimination of the federal Department of Education. (Congressional Record, 1980, cited by DeLeon & VandenBos, p. 415)

The effects of the Republican cutbacks with respect to social programs, including those for students with high abilities, was not readily apparent in the mid-1980s. The strong national economy, between 1984-1988, helped state and local governments raise money to continue programs that had lost Federal support. In the late 1980s, however, a downturn in many economic indicators occurred. This slowdown caused states to bear increasing social responsibilities, including education, the largest budget item in every state (one out of every three dollars in state treasuries is spent on education). Further, the effect of the new system of block grants, designed to give local officials more power, became increasingly apparent. Put simply, local officials were provided with less money to underwrite state programs. Block grants were underwritten with only a fraction of the amount previously allocated to categorical programs which were now folded into the block grants. As a result, increasing financial pressures were brought to bear on the states. Few, if any states, had options to pay for the increasing demands from social programs.

The brightest spot for high ability students and those who advocated their needs during the 1980s occurred in 1988 with the passage of the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act, Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Named for Senator Jacob K. Javits, who advocated persistently for high ability students at the federal level, the act was designed to renew national leadership in the field and emphasize the needs of America's exceptional and underserved students. Specifically, the $7.9 and $8.9 million appropriated in 1989 and 1990, respectively, was designed to: restore a national office of the gifted and talented in the Office of Education, establish a national research center to conduct and disseminate research on children with high abilities, prioritize the needs of underserved and at-risk exceptional children, and ensure that high ability children and teachers in private educational institutions benefited from the activities sponsored by the act.

Current Program Status

Conflicting opinions exist among researchers and experts in the field of gifted education regarding the current status of programs for students with high abilities. Many of today's researchers in the education of the gifted and talented (Dettmer, 1993; Feldman, 1991; Parker & Karnes, 1991) would testify to the validity of some of the predictions made 10 to 15 years ago. They cite significant progress for the field including, for example: legislation for the gifted, increases in the number of institutions of higher education offering special courses in the education of the gifted, increases in the number of publications and research efforts in the field, and funding through the Javits Act. Dettmer (1993), discussing the unparalleled opportunities for educators of the gifted in this time of reform, concludes, "The gifted education vessel, bobbed about in the choppy, unpredictable, sometimes stormy waters for many years, ...has gathered momentum in the past decade" (p. 94). After examining national surveys to determine the number of degree programs in gifted and talented education and gifted education centers, Parker and Karnes (1991) conclude: "These figures reflect an encouraging surge of interest in the education of the gifted among institutions of higher learning" (p. 44). Feldman (1991) argues that a new wave of interest in the education of students with high abilities is underway. Using Kuhn's (1970) model for scientific revolutions, Feldman cites a number of new features that are changing the "moribund" (p. 14) state of the field. These features include: the acknowledgment of new, multiple forms of intelligence, the use and preference for developmental theories of giftedness, identification of gifted and

talented individuals based on performance rather than on tests, a new focus on excellence rather than elitism, an emphasis on the context as a means for nurturing giftedness, and an emphasis on collaboration rather than top-down administrative models for programs. Based on the new emerging paradigms within the field, Feldman concludes, "One feels an explosion of power and energy building in the field" (p. 15).

While many experts argue for advances in the field at the national level and at institutions of higher learning, a smaller, but increasing, number of researchers and journalists are not convinced that a new wave of interest in the education of the gifted and talented actually exists. These authors disagree with the paradigm shift theorists and are more cautious in their outlook about the future of gifted education. They cite at least three forces which are causing a reduction in the number and scope of some programs at the local level: the continuing national economic decline, misconceptions about the special needs of students identified as gifted and talented, and the effect of prevailing reform efforts and resultant policy decisions at the local level.

Reasons Attributed to the Decline of Programs for Students With High Abilities

Journalists, experts in the field of gifted education, and researchers cite the deepening economic crisis as a major reason for the reduction of programs for the gifted. Radin (1991), Kelly (1991), and Marcus (1992) chronicle the decline in the number of programs for the gifted in the Northeast area and argue that economic factors have precipitated the reduction. Radin's front-page article in *The Boston Globe* concludes that "Education for the brightest public school students in New England is falling far behind what is offered their peers in other parts of the country" (p. 1). Kelly, in *USA Today*, claims that programs for the gifted "have suffered varying fates, suffering mostly where economies are poor" (p. 18). Marcus, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, concludes that programs for students with high abilities are "the early casualties of budget-cutting" (p. 3). Valerie Seaberg, former president of the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, believes that *The 1990 State of the States Gifted and Talented Education Report* documented an increase in overall state funding for programs between 1987-1990 (Kelly, 1991, p. 18). However, she believes that "the 1990 survey was conducted before it could measure the impact of state cuts brought on by the recession" (Kelly, 1991, p. 18). Purcell (1992) conducted a survey of local gifted and talented programs in Connecticut, 1989-1991. The results indicated a 16% increase between the school year 1989-1990 and 1990-1991 in the number of programs that were either eliminated, reduced, or threatened with elimination and/or reduction. One hundred percent of respondents reporting programs in jeopardy attributed the difficulty to fiscal constraints.

Singal (1991) and Feldhusen (1989) believe that the reduction in programs for the gifted may be due to a misunderstanding about the special needs of students identified as gifted. Feldhusen argues that the public will continue to ignore the needs of high ability students because of misconceptions about their needs and that, as a result, more capable students will begin to "systematically demotivate" (p. 58). Singal calls the most able students in America "forgotten victims" of the national education system and suggests that programs for the gifted receive "no more than token interest" (p. 67).

Slavin (in Manuel, 1992), Sapon-Shevin (in Manuel, 1992; Sapon-Shevin, 1994), and Renzulli and Reis (1991) attribute the decline of programs for the gifted to the effects of the reform movement, specifically the elimination of grouping practices. Robert Slavin and Mara Sapon-Shevin, advocates for heterogeneous grouping, believe that gifted programs are elitist, have little effect on achievement and can be "racially motivated" (Sapon-Shevin, quoted in Manuel, 1992, p. 37). Sapon-Shevin (1994) also contends that programs for high potential students have become safety valves and function to maintain

dysfunctional school systems. More specifically, to escape the pressures of vocal and influential parents in large urban districts, school personnel place "doctors' kids, lawyers' kids and professors' kids" in programs for high ability students to avoid the cost of restructuring whole school systems (Sapon-Shevin, quoted in Lockwood, 1993). Both Slavin and Sapon-Shevin argue for the continued elimination of tracking and ability grouping, including programs for the gifted. They suggest the return to heterogeneous grouping is now a "coast to coast movement" (Slavin, as quoted in Manuel, 1992, p. 37) that is in the best interest of all children, including the gifted, and accordingly, these researchers attribute the decline in the number of local gifted and talented programs to policy decisions by local boards of education in support of heterogeneous grouping practices. Renzulli and Reis (1991), nationally known experts in the education of the gifted, also believe the reform movement is causing a decline in the number of programs for the gifted and talented offered at the local level. "We believe that the field of education for the gifted and talented is currently facing a quiet crisis...one that is knocking its victims [programs] off one at a time...and that in many ways this crisis is directly related to the educational reform movement in America" (p. 26).

Clearly, those who believe that the field of gifted education is experiencing a retrenchment attribute a variety of reasons to the field's declining status. Viadero (1992), in a recent front page story in *Education Week*, reported on this complexity of beliefs, and concluded, "For the time being, though, advocates and gifted educators say it is too soon to tell how much of the retrenchment in gifted education programs is the result of changing educational philosophies and how much is the result of the weakened economy" (p. 1, 14 & 15).

The Effect of State Mandates

Mandates, laws which require identification and/or differentiated curriculum for the gifted, have been the center of controversy during the last decade. Educators, experts in the field of gifted and talented education, and policy makers disagree with respect to the effect mandates have on programs for students with high abilities. In a special feature section on mandates in *The Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, Dettmer (1988) cautioned against legislative mandates which usurp local control. She indicated that legislated learning can equalize opportunities, resources and programs, but that they can also alter, in negative ways, the control a district has over the quality of a program's services. Alternatively, she suggested the use of a variety of strategies, including local initiatives and permissive legislation, which she believed to be more responsive to the needs of individual localities and which may "ultimately prove to provide more multidimensional approaches to student identification" (p. 19) than states with mandates.

Wise (1988) also argued for local control. He believed that the future of education will be determined by community members who must decide between state control that produces standardized results through regulation, or client control which he believes meets students' educational needs. Paradoxically, he noted that mandates initially "designed to improve education, often reduce its effectiveness" (p. 330). Several state directors for gifted and talented education provided evidence in support of Wise's philosophy (Council of State Directors for Programs for the Gifted, 1991). They listed strengths of their state's non-mandated programs as flexibility and local initiatives.

Salkind (1988) took the counterpoint position with respect to mandates and concluded that students identified as gifted and talented were deserving of mandated educational services. Arguing the special needs of gifted students, he declared that these special children cannot be placed at the "complete whim of political and social factors that are unrelated to these children's health and well-being" (p. 6).

The paucity of empirical evidence available concerning variables which positively influence a state's response to the educational needs of gifted and talented students supports Salkind's position regarding the need for mandates. Miller and Sabatino (1982) used regression analysis to isolate the most significant variables explaining the level of gifted services and funding among the states. A set of nine variables was included in their study:

1. State mandates for gifted and talented programs
2. State certification of teachers for gifted and talented students
3. State statutes governing the administration of gifted and talented programs
4. State plans for gifted and talented programs
5. State education agency personnel assigned to gifted and talented education
6. State use of Title IV-C funds for gifted and talented programs
7. State administration of gifted and talented programs through special education
8. State definition of gifted and talented students
9. Level of funding for special education

Results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that the set of policies investigated explained little of the variation (14%) with respect to the level of state services. Two policies, state-mandated programs for gifted and talented services and a high level of special education funding, had a significantly positive effect on variation in state services for gifted and talented students. Results of the regression analysis also revealed that a moderate amount of variation (36%) in the level of state funding was explained by the set of variables. Three of them were significant predictors and included: state mandates to program for more able students, state certification of teachers for gifted and talented students, and state statutes governing the administration of gifted and talented programs and services.

In spite of the controversy regarding the advantages and disadvantages of state mandates to require services to high ability students, more than half of all states currently require such services to able students, and Dettmer (1988) observed that "it appears that states tend not to rescind mandates once they are in effect" (p. 14). Perhaps it was the sense of permanency associated with mandates that advocates for the gifted and legislators found so appealing. However permanent a mandate may be, it is not a guarantee with respect to the comprehensiveness and quality of services provided to gifted and talented students. Mitchell (1981) likened mandates to matches. They can ignite commitment to serving the gifted and talented, but their effect will be short-lived unless they are "fueled by additional support (i.e., adequate funding, technical assistance to program developers, and training opportunities for school personnel)" (p. 12). Clearly, little consensus exists regarding the effect of state mandates and the degree to which they influence the status of programs for students with high abilities.

Methods

Research Design

This study used a descriptive ex post facto research design to address the three research questions which guided this research:

1. What is the current status (i.e., expanded; reduced; eliminated; threatened with reduction and/or elimination, but intact; intact) of programs for high ability students in a purposive sample of 19 states?
2. To what causes do local representatives from school systems attribute the current status of programs for students with high abilities?
3. What is the perception of key respondents* from the same 19 states regarding which factors** led to the elimination and retention of programs for these students?

Research questions 1 and 2 were examined in Phase I of the study, which took place between February, 1992 and September, 1992, and research question 3 was examined during the second phase of the research, which took place between October and December, 1992.

Phase I

Sample

States for the study were selected using purposive sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 67) to facilitate comparisons among four groups of states:

- Group 1-those in good economic health with legislative laws and regulations which mandate services for students with high abilities
- Group 2-those in good economic health, but without a mandate
- Group 3-those in poor economic health with a mandate
- Group 4-those in poor economic health, but without a mandate

The economic health of states was determined using three criteria suggested by Dr. Peter Barth, chairperson of the Economics Department at The University of Connecticut, and Mr. John Carson, past Commissioner of Economic Development for Connecticut and currently president of the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council. Indices of economic health suggested by these two experts included: the state unemployment rate, the state per capita income, and the state debt per $1000 personal income. States were ranked according to each of these measures, and three groups of states emerged from the rankings: those that fell above the 50-state average with respect to unemployment and state debt per $1000 personal income and those that ranked below the 50-state average with respect to per capita income. States that appeared in two of these three groups were considered to be in poor economic health. It is important to note that the most current figures available with respect to per capita income and state debt per

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* Key respondents included: state directors, heads of state parent organizations for students with high abilities, school superintendents, and chairpersons of boards of education.

** Factors include, for example: policy, economic conditions, misunderstandings regarding the needs of students with high abilities.

$1000 were for FY 1989-1990. In light of the economic decline that continued since 1989-1990, some of the states initially targeted as in good economic health may have been less economically healthy as the study began. To obtain a more current evaluation of these states' economic health, phone calls were made to the state directors for gifted education in the states targeted as economically healthy. State directors were questioned regarding their state's current economic status (i.e., in good economic health, in poor economic health). Although none of the state directors interviewed believed their states were in excellent economic health, they believed their states were moderately healthy overall, and in better economic health than most of the states in the nation. A decision was made, therefore, to retain the original list of states in good economic health.

The 50 states were subsequently divided into two additional groups by the existence or nonexistence of a mandate to provide educational services to students with high abilities. Data regarding the existence of such policies were taken from *The 1990 State of the States Gifted and Talented Education Report* (Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 1991) and phone queries to individual state directors about the existence and nonexistence of state mandates. States, geographically representative (i.e., northern, southern, eastern, and western) were selected from each of the four groups to comprise the sample of 19 states for this research (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Program Status Research Study Design, Phase I

Mandate	Economic Health: Good	Economic Health: Poor
	Group 1 Alaska Florida Utah Virginia	**Group 3** Louisiana Maine Mississippi Oregon West Virginia
	Group 2 Idaho Indiana Michigan Missouri Nevada	**Group 4** Connecticut Delaware New Mexico* North Dakota Wyoming

Group 1—Good economic health with a state mandate
Group 2—Good economic health, but without a state mandate
Group 3—Poor economic health with a state mandate
Group 4—Poor economic health, but without a state mandate

* New Mexico, believed by many respondents to be without a mandate to provide services to high ability students, does have a mandate requiring educational services for these students. Because it was believed that the data from respondents in New Mexico would mask the findings from Group 4, the data were analyzed twice. The data sets were similar and, accordingly, a decision was made to retain the data from respondents in New Mexico.

Instrument Development

The Advocacy Survey was piloted in Connecticut on samples similar to the one used in this national research. During two successive academic years, 1989-1990 and 1990-1991, a 7-item questionnaire was sent to personnel in local districts in Connecticut to determine the status of programs for the gifted and talented. Response rates were moderate: 72% in 1989-1990 and 57% in 1990-1991.

During the pilot years, changes were made in the survey at respondents' requests and these changes lend credibility to the validity and reliability of the survey. The first change was the addition of a status category, "threatened, but intact," to include the large percentage of personnel who indicated that their district's program for students with high abilities had been targeted by school personnel as a service which could be considered for reduction or elimination. The second change was the inclusion of a question concerning grade levels served by the program for students with high abilities, and provided data about the comprehensiveness of services in each district.

The Advocacy Survey used in the current research (see Appendix A) was accompanied by a separate sheet which contained definitions. Local personnel were provided with definitions of the status categories, as well as a definition of "program." For a program to exist, 50% of a local person's time had to be spent providing direct services to students. Concern existed that the definition of program services (i.e., 50% of one person's time devoted to direct services to students) might preclude the participation of some districts that partitioned the delivery of program services among several personnel. To determine that the percentage of these districts was not proportionally large, a space was provided on which respondents could indicate that their program did not exist according to the definition provided. Subsequent analyses revealed that very small percentages of respondents had programs that did not qualify under the definition supplied (Group 1: 3%; Group 2: 3%; Group 3: 1%; Group 4: 2%).

Additionally, "students with high ability" was the nomenclature selected to describe gifted students. It was believed that the more inclusive nature of the term would preclude confusion among the thousands of respondents from 19 different states regarding the meaning of gifted, talented, or gifted and talented.

Data Collection

During the spring of 1992, the first three mailings for Phase I of the research were prepared. To ensure the highest possible response rate, procedures recommended in a meta-analysis of factors which positively influenced response rates (Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988) were followed. Accordingly, prenotification letters, mailed May 17, 1992, preceded the mailing of the surveys on May 21, 1992. Additionally, surveys were printed on colored stationery, transmittal letters were printed on university letterhead, and an incentive (a pencil imprinted with The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented) accompanied the first survey. A follow-up to nonrespondents, which included another survey, was mailed on June 8, 1992.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (i.e., techniques to organize and summarize information) were applied to the nominal data on the surveys: the status of the program, the primary reason attributed to program status, and the grade levels served, 1991-1992. A content analysis was conducted on the comments voluntarily provided by respondents. These comments were categorized into three types: positive, neutral, and those expressing

concern. Positive comments included statements describing growth, progress, and respondent satisfaction with programs designed to service students with high abilities. Neutral comments generally did not express either satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding program activities, but rather described some aspect concerning the nature of services provided. Comments expressing concern represented the largest response percentage (Group 1, 59%; Group 2, 67%; Group 3, 56%; Group 4, 68%), and this group of comments was subdivided into 11 different categories to reflect the factors of concern described by all respondents.

Phase II

Sample

The second phase of this descriptive ex post facto research examined research question 3: the perceptions of key respondents from the same 19 states regarding factors (e.g., policy, economic conditions, the reform movement) that led to the retention and elimination of programs for high ability students. The subjects for this phase of the research included four people from each state who held leadership positions with respect to the education of able students: the state director of gifted and talented education, the president of a state organization of parents of students with high abilities, a school superintendent, and a chairperson of a board of education. The first two key personnel listed above had a vested interest in the education of high ability students. The latter two key personnel were suggested by the state director according to three guidelines supplied by the researcher. The first guideline requested that the state director purposefully choose a superintendent and board chairperson who were concerned about the welfare of the general student body; that is, those selected were not to have a vested interest in any particular group of students (i.e., learning disabled, students with high abilities, students with limited English proficiency). The second guideline specified that key personnel represent different geographical school districts. The third guideline concerned the willingness of subjects to be interviewed by phone regarding their beliefs about the factors related to the retention and elimination of programs for the gifted; subjects had to be willing to participate in a 15-20 minute phone interview. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) call this type of sampling "snowball sampling" (p. 67).

Instrument Development

The Advocacy Questionnaire, based on The Advocacy Survey and containing six open-ended questions, was used to guide the semistructured telephone interviews. Support for the content validity of the questionnaire was also established in a field trial with parents of gifted and talented children and teachers of the gifted.

Data Collection

In July, 1992, a letter requesting the names of key personnel was sent to state directors in the 19 states in the sample. In early October a prenotification letter was sent to key personnel explaining how they had been selected, the format for the telephone interview, and inviting questions related to the interviews. None of the key personnel declined to be interviewed. Between October and December, 1992, telephone interviews with key personnel were conducted. During the interview neutrality was maintained to avoid contamination of the data, and subjects were encouraged to structure their own account. The semistructured interview approach ensured comparability of data, as well as digressions to ensure "insights on how subjects interpreted some piece of their world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 135). Not all key personnel were interviewed in this phase of the research because repetition in the data occurred after 32 interviews were

conducted. To verify that data saturation had been reached, four additional interviews were conducted with key personnel in Nevada. Data collected in the latter round of interviews reflected the data collected from the 32 interviews conducted earlier.

Data Analysis

Data from the telephone interviews were analyzed in two overlapping stages. While interviews were being conducted, data were analyzed in an on-going fashion using the "constant comparative method" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 104). When data collection was completed, more intensive analysis was used to identify repeating themes across all responses, across categories of states (i.e., Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4), and across group membership (i.e., state directors, parent advocates, school superintendents, board chairpersons). During the analysis of the data from the telephone interviews, emerging themes were discussed with experts in the field of gifted and talented education. The purpose of these discussions was to ask questions of the data, to challenge the researcher's emerging hypotheses, and to develop alternative explanations to improve the "accuracy and comprehensiveness" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) of the data.

Results and Discussions

The following description of the results from the research contains two sections. The first section delineates the findings from Phase I of The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993a) which was concerned with research questions 1 and 2:

1. What is the current status (i.e., expanded; reduced; eliminated; threatened with reduction and/or elimination, but intact; intact) of programs for high ability students in a purposive sample of 19 states?
2. To what causes do local representatives from school systems attribute the current status of programs for students with high abilities?

The second section delineates the findings from Phase II of the research which was concerned with research question 3:

3. What is the perception of key respondents (i.e., state directors, heads of state parent organizations for students with high abilities, school superintendents, chairpersons of boards of education) from the same 19 states regarding which factors (e.g., policy, economic conditions, misunderstandings regarding the needs of students with high abilities) led to the elimination and retention of programs for these students?

Phase I

The Advocacy Survey was used to collect data in this phase of the research, and the survey asked for three categories of information: (1) the status of programs for students with high abilities, (2) the reasons attributed by respondents to the current program status, and (3) the scope or comprehensiveness of the programs for these students. Accordingly, results from Phase I of this research are presented in five sections, including: The Advocacy Survey Overview, the Response Rate for the Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993a), Program Status, Reasons Attributed by Respondents to Program Status, and the Comprehensiveness of Programs for Students With High Abilities. Results presented in the latter three sections are presented by category of state (i.e., Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4).

All of the results presented are at the group level; that is, the data related to program status, primary reasons attributed to program status, and comprehensiveness of programs are averages for the categories of states. This method of reporting necessarily masks the uniqueness of individual state profiles. Accordingly, the individual state data may be obtained by contacting the author through The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

The Advocacy Survey Overview

The Advocacy Survey asked respondents to provide information concerning the status of programs. The status categories and definitions supplied to respondents included:

- expanded—programs that have been allocated more money either from the state or the local education association to provide more direct services to high ability students
- intact—programs that remain as is
- threatened, but intact—programs that have been identified by administrators, board of education members or others as services that can be reduced or eliminated
- reduced—programs in which personnel, grade levels, or special program components have contracted in some way
- eliminated—programs that have been totally cut
- a program never existed
- a program was eliminated prior to 1988
- a program will be implemented in 1992-1993
- other—(e.g., there is no program according to the definition provided, program was eliminated for 1992-1993)

Program was defined by the amount of time spent by personnel in direct contact with high ability students. Specifically, a program existed if at least one person in the district spent 50% of his/her time providing direct services to students.

Respondents were also asked to identify the most important reason for the current status of the program. Those respondents who identified the program as intact or expanded selected from the following reasons:

1. Existence of a state mandate to provide services to students with high abilities
2. Active support from advocacy groups
3. Increased state funding for local programs
4. Increased funding from the local education agency

Those respondents who indicated that their district's program was reduced, eliminated, or threatened with reduction/elimination were asked to select from the following reasons:

1. There is no state mandate to require educational services for students with high abilities
2. There has been a reduction in state aid for such programs
3. The local funds for programs for students with high abilities have been reduced
4. Misconceptions exist regarding programs and program outcomes
5. Lack of administrative support

6. Lack of sufficient advocacy from support groups
7. Policy decisions resulting from educational reform issues, such as the elimination of grouping practices
8. Misunderstandings about the needs of students with high abilities

Finally, respondents were asked to identify the comprehensiveness of the district's program for students with high abilities. They were provided with a list of grade levels, pre-K through 12, and asked to check the levels that received services in their districts.

Response Rate

The Advocacy Survey was mailed to 2,926 educators of high ability students in the sample of 19 states and a total of 1,579 surveys were returned by September 1, 1992. Accordingly, Phase I of the research had an overall response rate of 54%. Response rates for states from Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4 were 56%, 55%, 53% and 49%, respectively. Response rates from individual states were as follows:

Group 1

Alaska-52%
Florida-60%
Utah-37%
Virginia-74%

Group 2

Idaho-46%
Indiana-68%
Michigan-53%
Missouri-53%
Nevada-58%

Group 3

Louisiana-58%
Maine-52%
Mississippi-60%
Oregon-52%
West Virginia-46%

Group 4

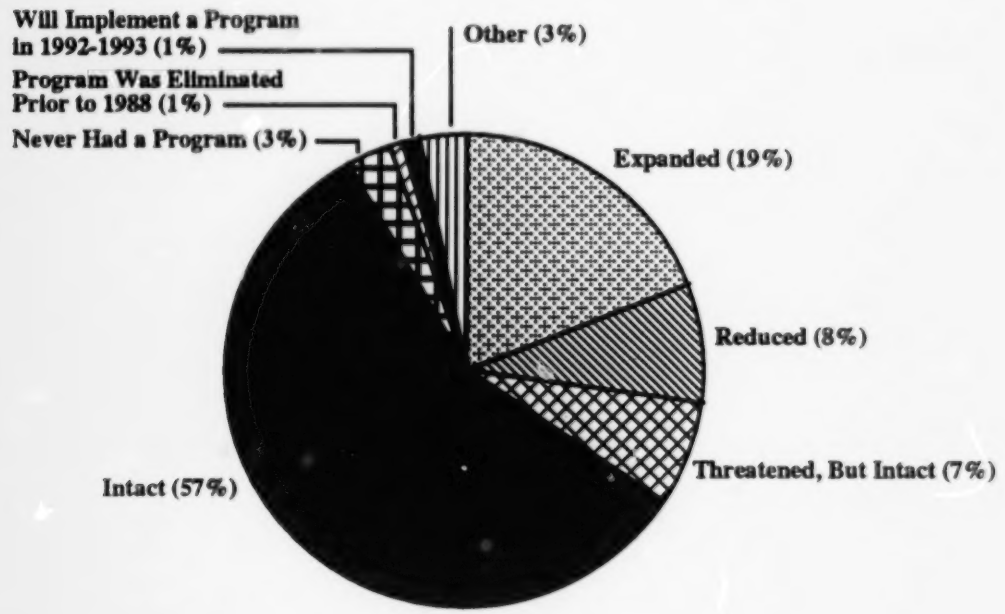
Connecticut-63%
Delaware-54%
North Dakota-42%
New Mexico-41%
Wyoming-52%

Status of Programs

Group 1 (n=195)

Over three fourths (77%) of programs for students with high abilities in states in good economic health and with a state mandate to provide services to these students were expanded, intact, or in the process of being implemented in the 1992-1993 academic year (see Figure 2). Fifteen percent of programs from this category of states experienced jeopardy in the 1991-1992 academic year, and an additional three percent of respondents indicated that a program had never existed. One percent of respondents from this group indicated that programs were eliminated in the last five years, and three percent of respondents reported their status as "other."

Figure 2. Status of Programs for Students With High Abilities, Group 1—Good Economic Health With a State Mandate [Alaska, Florida, Utah, and Virginia (n=195)]*



* Percentages have been rounded

Group 2 (n=708)

As delineated in Figure 3, a smaller percentage of programs in Group 2 were reported as expanded, intact, or scheduled for implementation in 1992-1993. Two thirds (66%) of the respondents from Group 2 states reported programs in these status categories, and this number is 11% less than the number reported by respondents in states from Group 1. Approximately one quarter of the respondents from Group 2 reported programs as reduced, eliminated, or threatened, but intact, and 4% of respondents indicated that a program had never existed.

Group 3 (n=423)

Approximately two thirds (67%) of the 483 respondents in Group 3 (poor economic health and with a state mandate) reported programs as expanded, intact, or scheduled for implementation in 1992-1993, a percentage nearly identical to the percentage of respondents in Group 2 reporting programs in these status categories (see Figure 4). Twenty-seven percent of respondents from this category of states reported that programs were experiencing jeopardy: that is, these respondents reported programs were reduced or threatened with reduction/elimination. Three percent of respondents indicated that a program for high ability students had never existed.

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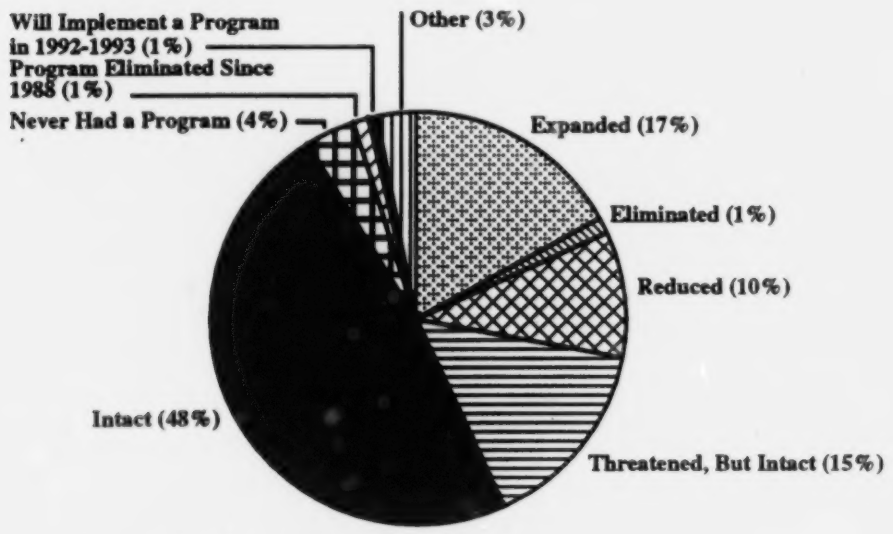
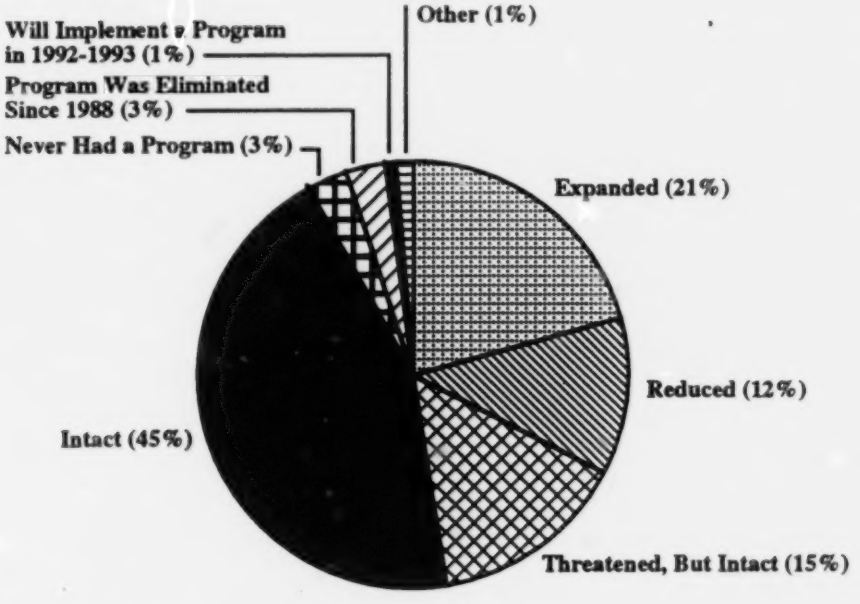
Figure 3. **Status of Programs for Students With High Abilities, Group 2—Good Economic Health Without a State Mandate [Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, and Nevada (n=708)]***



* Percentages have been rounded

Figure 4. **Status of Programs for Students With High Abilities, Group 3—Poor Economic Health With a State Mandate [Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Oregon, and West Virginia (n=423)]***



* Percentages have been rounded

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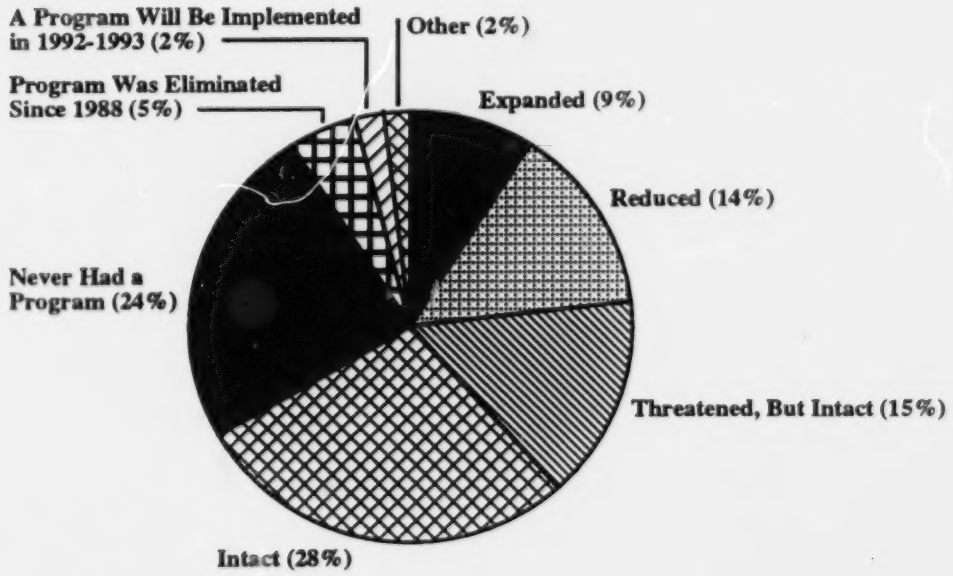
It is important to note that respondents in three of the five states in group 3 reported that state mandates and mandate initiatives were threatened in the 1991-1992 academic year. Because of a deepening state fiscal crisis, Maine's mandate, scheduled for full implementation in 1992-1993, was delayed until 1994-1995. For the same reason, Mississippi delayed full implementation of services for students with high abilities, K-12, for one academic year, from 1992-1993 to 1993-1994. Respondents from Oregon reported that their state's mandate to provide services for students with high abilities, effective in the 1991-1992 academic year, was currently threatened by strong grass roots initiatives to place a ceiling on local property taxes, which are used to fund educational programs.

Group 4 (n=253)

As can be seen in Figure 5, a much smaller percentage of programs was reported as expanded, intact, or scheduled for implementation in 1992-1993 by respondents from states in Group 4 (poor economic health without a mandate). Thirty-nine percent of respondents in this group reported programs in these status categories, and this number is 38% less than the number of programs reported in these status categories by respondents in Group 1. Twenty-nine percent of respondents from Group 4 reported programs as reduced or threatened, but intact, five percent reported that programs had been eliminated prior to 1988, and 24% indicated that a program for students with high abilities had never existed.

Figure 5. Status of Programs for Students With High Abilities, Group 4—Poor Economic Health Without a State Mandate [Connecticut, Delaware, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Wyoming (n=253)]*



* Percentages have been rounded

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It is more meaningful to combine the different status categories into two groups: those which reflected stability or growth with respect to services provided to students with high abilities and those which reflect jeopardy concerning services for students with high abilities. Accordingly, the following status categories comprised the first group: expanded, intact, a program for students with high abilities will be impiemented in 1992-1993. Status categories comprising the second group included: threatened, but intact; reduced; eliminated; a program was eliminated since 1988 (see Table 1). Respondents from Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4 who reported programs in the first category included 77%, 66%, 67%, and 39%, respectively. Thus, 11%, 12%, and 38% fewer programs in Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4, respectively, were reported by local personnel as expanded, intact, or scheduled for implementation when compared to programs reported in these status categories by respondents in Group 1. Respondents from Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4 who reported programs in the second category included 16%, 27%, 30%, and 34%, respectively. Thus, 11%, 14%, and 18% more programs in Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4, respectively, were reported to have experienced jeopardy when compared to programs reported in these status categories by respondents from Group 1.

The data are more sobering if responses from the status category, never had a program, are added into the second clustered category. If the respondents reporting never had a program are added to the totals of columns 4-7, 19%, 31%, 33%, and 58% of respondents in Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4, respectively, reported jeopardized programs or reported programs had never existed. Accordingly, 12%, 14%, and 39% more programs in Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4 were reported in jeopardy or as programs that never existed.

Thus, the data indicate that approximately three-fourths of programs from Group 1 were expanded or intact. This is encouraging news in light of the continuing national economic malaise (Diegmueller, 1992a, 1992b). However, programs from Group 2 and Group 4, as well as programs, mandates and mandate initiatives in Group 3, are being threatened, reduced, and eliminated in higher numbers. These findings differ from the claim of researchers (Dettmer, 1993; Feldman, 1991; Parker & Karnes, 1991), who cite significant progress in some areas of the field. Dettmer (1991) suggests that the field "has gathered momentum" (p. 94) in the last decade. Feldman argues that a new wave of interest in the education of students with high abilities is underway and that one can feel "an explosion of power and energy building in the field" (p. 15). Simply put, the majority of respondents from the sample of 20 states did not report a "gathering of momentum," "an explosion of power," or the beginning of a new wave of interest in the education of students with high abilities. It is believed that the difference between the present findings related to the status of local programs and the theories about the current status of the field by Dettmer (1991) and Feldman (1991) exist because the latter two theories were based upon events which occurred at institutions of higher learning (e.g., an increase in the number of scholarly research publications about students with high abilities, increased enrollment in courses and at national conferences focusing on these students) and at the federal level (i.e., increased money allocated to grants related to students with high abilities). The present study is based on events that occurred at the local level to programs. Accordingly, the current findings are not contradictory; they present a new and different picture of what is happening in the field at the local level.

Table 1

Percentage of Respondents Reporting Status Categories, by Group[a]

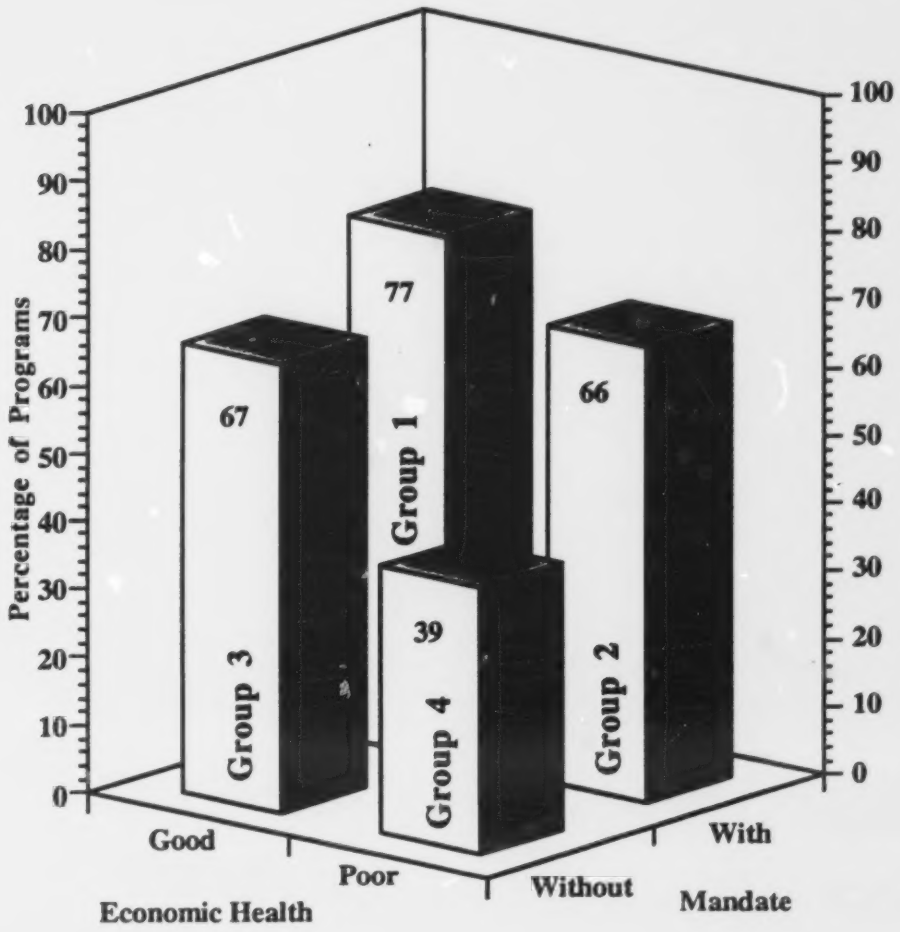
	Status Categories										
	Secure Status Categories				Jeopardized Status Categories						
Group	Exp.[b]	Intact	W.Imp.	Tot.	Elim.	Red.	Threat.	Elim.(1988)	Tot.	Never	Tot.
column	1	2	3	(Col. 1-3)	4	5	6	7	(Col. 4-7)	8	(Col. 4-8)
Group 1	19	57	1	77	0	8	7	1	16	3	19
Group 2	17	48	1	66	1	10	15	1	27	4	31
Group 3	21	45	1	67	0	12	15	3	30	3	33
Group 4	9	28	2	39	0	14	15	5	34	24	58

[a] Percentages have been rounded

[b] Exp=expanded; Intact=intact; W.Imp.=will implement a program in 1992-1993; Elim.=eliminated; Red.=reduced; Threat.=threatened, but intact; Elim.(1988)=eliminated since 1988; Never=never had a program.

The data also clarify the relationship among the status of programs for high ability students, the existence of a state mandate, and economic health. The status of programs is most secure in states with mandates and in good economic health (see Figure 6); 77% of programs in these states were stable or intact. The data from respondents in states in Group 2 and Group 3 suggest that economic health and the existence of a state mandate to provide services to high ability students were associated in an equal way to the status of programs. Sixty-six percent of programs in Group 2 were reported in secure categories as were 67% of programs in Group 3. Programs in states without mandates and with poor economies were least secure; only 39% of programs were reported in stable categories.

Figure 6. Percentage of Secure Programs for High Ability Students, by Group



Group 1—Good economic health with a state mandate
Group 2—Good economic health, but without a state mandate
Group 3—Poor economic health with a state mandate
Group 4—Poor economic health, but without a state mandate

Reasons Attributed to Program Status

Across all categories of states, respondents whose programs were expanded or intact selected from reasons provided for them (i.e., existence of a state mandate to provide services, active support from advocacy groups, increased state or local funding). Respondents who reported that programs were threatened, reduced, or eliminated also had reasons from which to select (i.e., lack of a state mandate, reduction in state or local funding, lack of administrative support, lack of sufficient advocacy efforts, policy decisions resulting from educational reform issues, misunderstandings about the needs of the gifted). Accordingly, primary reason attributed to program status are reported first by category of state (i.e., Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4), and then according to program status reported by respondents (i.e., expanded or intact; reduced, threatened with reduction/elimination, eliminated).

Respondents who reported programs as threatened with reduction and/or elimination or reduced "double dipped" when they identified reasons for the current status of the program; that is, they not only selected reasons from the list provided for those whose programs experienced jeopardy, but they also selected reasons from the list provided for those who identified their programs as expanded or intact. Twelve percent of respondents who reported their programs as reduced "double dipped," as did 45% of respondents who reported programs as threatened with reduction and/or elimination. Double dipping was not prominent among those who identified programs as intact or expanded; only 8% of respondents who identified programs as expanded double dipped as did the same percentage of respondents who reported programs as intact. Because it was believed that double dippers artificially inflated the percentages of those who selected responses from the prescribed group of reasons, the data were analyzed twice. The first time the data were analyzed with the double dippers, and the second time the data were analyzed without the double dippers. Similar response sets appeared from both analyses. Thus, a decision was made to report the data including the double dippers; the inclusion of the data did not inflate the percentages of true responses and the data provided a noteworthy response pattern to be explained shortly. Accordingly, response percentages do not total 100% because multiple responses were selected.

Group 1 [Good Economic Health With a Mandate (n=195)]

Primary Reason Attributed by Respondents Reporting Programs as Intact or Expanded (n=163/84% of the respondents in Group 1). Of the 163 respondents in Group 1 who reported programs in stable status categories, more than one-third attributed the existence of a state mandate as the primary reason for the program's status. A smaller percentage of respondents from this group, 26%, believed that advocacy efforts were associated with the current status.

Primary Reason Attributed by Respondents Reporting Programs as Threatened, Reduced, or Eliminated (n=32/16% of respondents in Group 1). About one-fifth of respondents whose programs experienced jeopardy in Group 1 attributed the status to less state funds. Approximately 9% of respondents attributed the status to less state funds. Thus, more than one quarter of respondents who reported that programs were experiencing difficulty identified funding issues as most related to the current status. Sixteen percent of respondents in this category of states attributed the status of their program to the existence of the state mandate, perhaps indicating they believed the mandate saved programs from being reduced or reduced to a greater extent than they were in the 1991-1992 academic year.

Group 2 [Good Economic Health Without a State Mandate (n=708)]
Primary Reason Attributed by Respondents Reporting Programs as Intact or Expanded (n=459/65% of the respondents in Group 2). Of the 459 respondents in this group who reported programs in secure categories, about half, 46%, attributed program status to advocacy efforts made by parents, teachers, and administrators. Surprisingly, 21% of respondents who reported programs as expanded or intact attributed program status to the existence of a state mandate to provide services to students with high abilities. The fact that approximately 20% of these respondents from states without a mandate attributed their status to the existence of a mandate was puzzling. Can 20% of personnel (one in five respondents) from states in Group 2 who reported programs in these latter two status categories believe that their state has a mandate when, in fact, this is not the case? Further investigation revealed that one of the states from this group, Idaho, had a mandate initiative underway, and that the high percentage of respondents from Idaho (44%) who indicated a mandate was the primary reason for the program status skewed the overall percentage of respondents from other states in this group. Still, it is puzzling that such high percentages of respondents in the other states remain confused about the existence of a mandate to provide services to high ability students. Percentages of respondents from the remaining states in Group 2 (Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada) who reported programs as expanded and intact and indicated that a state mandate was the primary reason for the status of the program in their district included: 12%, 16%, 30%, and 20%, respectively.

Primary Reason Attributed by Respondents Reporting Programs as Threatened, Reduced, or Eliminated (n=183/26% of respondents in Group 2). Equal percentages of respondents (24%) attributed program status to state and local funding policies; that is, 24% of respondents attributed the jeopardy experienced by the program to less state funds and the same percentage of respondents attributed the jeopardy to less local funds. Looked at another way, almost 50% of Group 2 respondents who reported programs in these status categories attributed their jeopardy to financial reasons. A smaller percentage of respondents, 22%, attributed their jeopardized status to the lack of a state mandate. Interestingly, 18% of respondents double dipped to indicate that advocacy efforts were most associated with the current program status, suggesting that advocacy efforts in these districts preserved programs and kept them from being threatened or reduced more than they were in the 1991-1992 academic year.

Group 3 [Poor Economic Health With a Mandate (n=423)]
Primary Reason Attributed by Respondents Reporting Programs as Intact or Expanded (n=277/65% of the respondents in Group 3). Like their counterparts in Group 1, 68% of respondents in Group 3 who identified their program as intact or expanded attributed the status to the existence of a state mandate. Another 25% of respondents from this group believed that advocacy efforts contributed most to their program's current status.

Primary Reason Attributed by Respondents Reporting Programs as Threatened, Reduced, or Eliminated (n=114/27% of respondents in Group 3). Of the 114 respondents in this group who reported programs in jeopardized status categories, one half (53%) of respondents in this group identified funding issues as the primary reason for their program's status. Some of the respondents (18%) in this group attributed their status to advocacy efforts by support groups, suggesting perhaps that advocacy efforts saved programs in these districts from being threatened or reduced to an even greater extent.

Group 4 [Poor Economic Health Without a State Mandate (n=253)]
Primary Reason Attributed by Respondents Reporting Programs as Intact or Expanded (n=92/36% of respondents in Group 4). The response pattern for respondents in Group 4 who reported programs as intact or expanded was similar to the response pattern established by respondents in Group 2 who reported programs in the same status categories. Of the 92 respondents who reported programs in secure status categories, 46% of respondents attributed the status of their programs to advocacy efforts. This percentage is identical to the percentage of respondents in Group 2 who attributed the status of their programs to advocacy efforts. The fact that one quarter (24%) of respondents from these two status categories attributed their current status to the existence of a state mandate to provide services to students with high abilities was as puzzling as the large percentage of respondents in Group 2 who attributed the status of their programs to the existence of a state mandate. Why would one in four respondents from states without mandates and reporting programs as expanded or intact identify the existence of a state mandate as the primary reason for their current condition? Further investigation revealed that New Mexico, believed by many respondents to be without a mandate, did have a mandate to provide services to students with high abilities. The high percentage (67%) of respondents from New Mexico who attributed their program's status to the existence of a mandate skewed the percentages of respondents from other states in Group 4 who attributed their status to the same factor. The percentage of respondents from Connecticut, Delaware, North Dakota, and Wyoming who attributed their program's status to a state mandate included: 4%, 25%, 0%, and 11%, respectively.

Because it was believed that the data from respondents in New Mexico masked the findings from Group 4 (states without a mandate and in poor economic health), data were reanalyzed, excluding the information provided by respondents in New Mexico. Different findings emerged with respect to the status and comprehensiveness of programs for this category of states. With respect to the status of programs, slightly smaller numbers of programs were intact or expanded and a few more programs were reduced, eliminated, or threatened with reduction and/or elimination. With respect to the comprehensiveness of programs, the new data revealed that somewhat larger percentages of districts offered program services to students pre-K to K, and smaller percentages of districts provided services to students, grades one through twelve.

Primary Reason Attributed by Respondents Reporting Programs as Threatened, Reduced, or Eliminated (n=75/30% of respondents in Group 4). Almost half (43%) of respondents in these status categories identified the lack of a state mandate as the primary reason contributing to the program's status. Another 41% associated less funds, state and local, with the status of their district's program. Put another way, over 80% of respondents in this group attributed program jeopardy to the lack of a state mandate or the reduction of funds.

Two sets of patterns emerged from the data related to the reasons attributed by respondents to program status. The first set of patterns was associated with responses from states *with* mandates to provide services to high ability students. Similar response patterns emerged from all respondents in these categories of states who reported programs as intact or expanded. Fifty-six percent of respondents in Group 1 and 68% of respondents in Group 3 attributed program growth or stability to the existence of a state mandate and 26% in each group attributed advocacy efforts as the primary reason for the current program status. Put simply, respondents indicated that state mandates, regardless of state economic health, are most associated with program growth and stability. Decline of state and local financial support was the primary reason associated with programs experiencing jeopardy. Other factors, including decisions resulting from reform issues, did not feature prominently in the data from respondents in these two categories of states.

The second set of patterns related to the reasons attributed to program status emerged from states *without* mandates to provide services to students with high abilities. About half of the respondents, 46%, in these two categories of states (Group 2 and Group 4) who identified programs as expanded or intact attributed this status to advocacy efforts. Without state mandates to ensure program stability, respondents believed that the efforts of support groups contributed most to program growth and stability. Surprisingly, one quarter of the respondents from both groups did attribute their stability and growth to the existence of a state mandate. Although this contradiction was partially explained earlier (i.e., state mandate initiatives were underway and led personnel to believe their state did, in fact, have a mandate), significant portions of local personnel have misconceptions regarding the existence of a state mandate to provide services to students with high abilities. Reduction in funding was the primary reason attributed by the majority of respondents in Group 2 and Group 4 to programs that were threatened, reduced, or eliminated. Forty-eight percent of respondents in Group 2 and 41% of respondents in Group 4 attributed their jeopardized status to a reduction in state and local funds. With the exception of 43% of respondents in Group 4 who attributed their jeopardized status to the lack of a state mandate, none of the other reasons listed was attributed to program status by a significant portion of local personnel.

To summarize, whereas respondents in states with mandates attributed the stability and expansion of programs to the existence of a state mandate, respondents in states without mandates attributed the stability and growth of programs to support from advocacy efforts. A large percentage of respondents in all 19 states attributed the jeopardy experienced by programs to the decline of funding at the state and local level for programs that provide services for students with high abilities. Other reasons, including policy decisions resulting from reform issues, did not feature prominently in the data when viewed across the categories of states.

Slavin (in Manuel, 1992) argued that programs for students with high abilities are being eliminated from "coast to coast" (p. 37) due to policy decisions related to grouping and tracking issues. Sapon-Shevin argued that programs for the high ability students are racially motivated (in Manuel, 1992) and maintain dysfunctional school systems (in Lockwood, 1993; Sapon-Shevin, 1994) and suggested that programs are being eliminated for these reasons. The present research simply does not support either of these claims; the majority of respondents to The Advocacy Survey did not perceive that programs were being eliminated because of policy decisions related to reform issues, nor did the majority of respondents believe that programs were racially motivated and were being eliminated on the grounds of racial bias. The majority of respondents believed that the existence and nonexistence of state mandates, reductions in local and state funds, and advocacy efforts contributed to their current status.

Comprehensiveness of Programs

The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993a) also asked respondents to provide information related to the comprehensiveness of programs serving high ability students. Specifically, respondents were asked to report the grade levels which received program services.

Group 1

As depicted in Figure 7, respondents from Group 1 indicated that students in grades one through twelve were more likely to receive services than students pre-K to K. Data from respondents indicated that over 90% of districts in this group provided services to students in grades two through eight, approximately 70% of districts provided services

to students in kindergarten, 80% provided services to students grades nine to twelve, and approximately 10% of pre-K students received services.

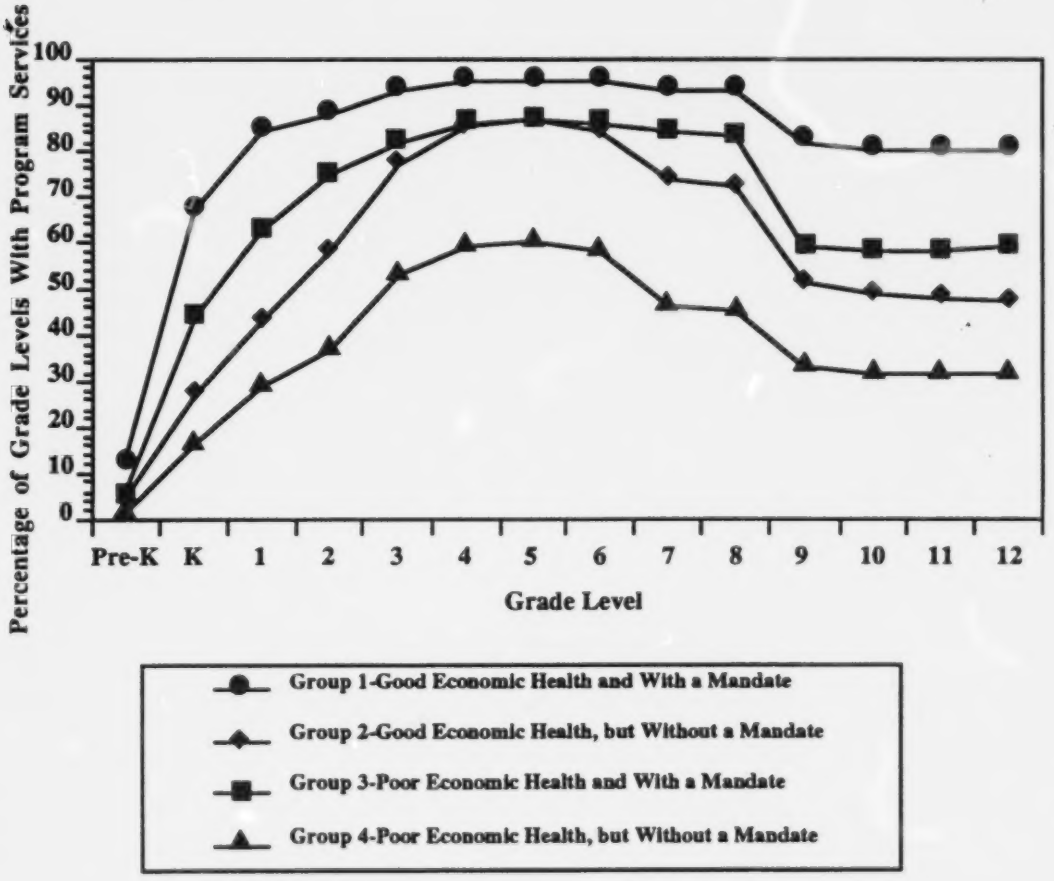
Group 2

According to respondents from Group 2, students in grades three to six were most likely to receive services. As depicted in Figure 7, approximately 80% of districts in this category of states provided services in these grades. About 40% of districts in this group provided services for grades kindergarten to two, as did approximately 50% for grades nine through twelve. Five percent of districts from the states in Group 2 provided services to pre-K children.

Group 3

Respondents from Group 3 reported that approximately 80% of school districts provided program services to students in grades three through eight. About 70% of districts provided services to students enrolled in grades one and two and grades nine through twelve. Only 5% of districts in this category of states provided services to students who had not yet entered kindergarten.

Figure 7. Comprehensiveness of Program Services, Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4



Group 4

According to respondents in Group 4, districts were most likely to provide services to students in grades four though six. Sixty percent of districts provided services to high ability students enrolled in these grades. About 30% of districts provided services to students in kindergarten through grade three, and 35% of districts provided services to students in secondary school, grades nine through twelve. Services to students who had not yet enrolled in kindergarten were nonexistent.

The data indicate that states without mandates and with poor economies not only provided fewer programs, but also served fewer grade levels in districts where programs existed. Ninety percent of districts in Group 1 provided services to students in six grade levels (grades three through eight); only 60% of districts from states in Group 4 provided programs and these programs, on average, served only three grade levels (grades four through six). A similar pattern existed between Group 1 and Group 4 with respect to the preprimary, primary, and secondary grade levels. While it is clear that a majority of upper elementary and middle school students are receiving services in districts where program services are available, districts in the present sample are not providing comprehensive services for students at either end of their public school experience. In spite of the literature which indicates that very young, high ability learners can be identified and served (Robinson, 1987; Robinson, 1993; Roedell, Jackson, & Robinson, 1980), young students in this sample are not being serviced. Quite simply, districts without services for this group are missing the opportunity to identify and nurture their high ability students in important, formative years. Furthermore, in spite of researchers (Callahan, 1979; Leroux, 1986; Maker, 1982; Passow, 1986; Reis, 1987; Renzulli & Reis, 1985; Willings, 1986) who argue for the need for differentiated educational and counseling services beyond those provided in the comprehensive high school, secondary school students in half of the schools sampled are not being provided with sufficient stimulation.

Phase II

Key personnel (i.e., state directors, parent advocates, school superintendents, board chairpersons) were selected and interviewed to determine their perceptions with respect to the factors that contribute to the elimination and retention of programs for students with high abilities. Procedures related to the selection of these respondents and the interview were described earlier. The telephone interviews were conducted between October and December, 1992, until repetition in the data occurred after approximately 32 interviews. Two states were selected purposefully from each group of states for the interviews (Group 1: Alaska and Virginia; Group 2: Indiana and Michigan; Group 3: Mississippi and West Virginia; Group 4: Connecticut and North Dakota). States were selected because respondent data were unusual in some way, and reasons for selection included: a high response rate (e.g., Virginia), a low response rate (e.g., West Virginia) and unusual features in the data (e.g., North Dakota: 57% of respondents reported programs had never existed). Accordingly, eight interviews with each type of key personnel were completed. To verify that repetition in the data was occurring, an additional four interviews were conducted with the key personnel from Nevada, and findings from the last round of interviews reflected findings from the data gathered in the 32 earlier interviews. Key personnel were asked six questions, including:

1. What factors are associated with programs for students with high abilities that are intact or experiencing growth?
2. What factors are associated with programs for students with high abilities that are reduced, eliminated, or threatened with reduction/elimination?

3. What will be the status of programs for students with high abilities in the next five years?
4. What factors will most likely influence the status of programs over the next five years?
5. What will be the extent of funding for these programs in the state over the next several years?
6. How can programs for students with high abilities be improved?

Results from this phase of the research will be organized by these six questions. The frequency of responses and the nature of responses were analyzed across categories of states and across group membership for response patterns in the six interview questions. The number of responses from key personnel to all six questions across group membership was similar. For example, the average number of factors identified by state directors, parent advocates, school superintendents, and board chairpersons for the first question was 2, 2.1, 1.3, and 2.1, respectively. Although superintendents provided slightly fewer responses to this question, differences were so slight that patterns with respect to the frequency of response by one or more groups were discounted, as were patterns with respect to the remaining questions. Additionally, an analysis of the nature of responses from key personnel indicated that no idiosyncratic patterns existed with respect to group membership. Furthermore, patterns did not emerge with respect to the frequency and nature of responses from personnel in each category of states.

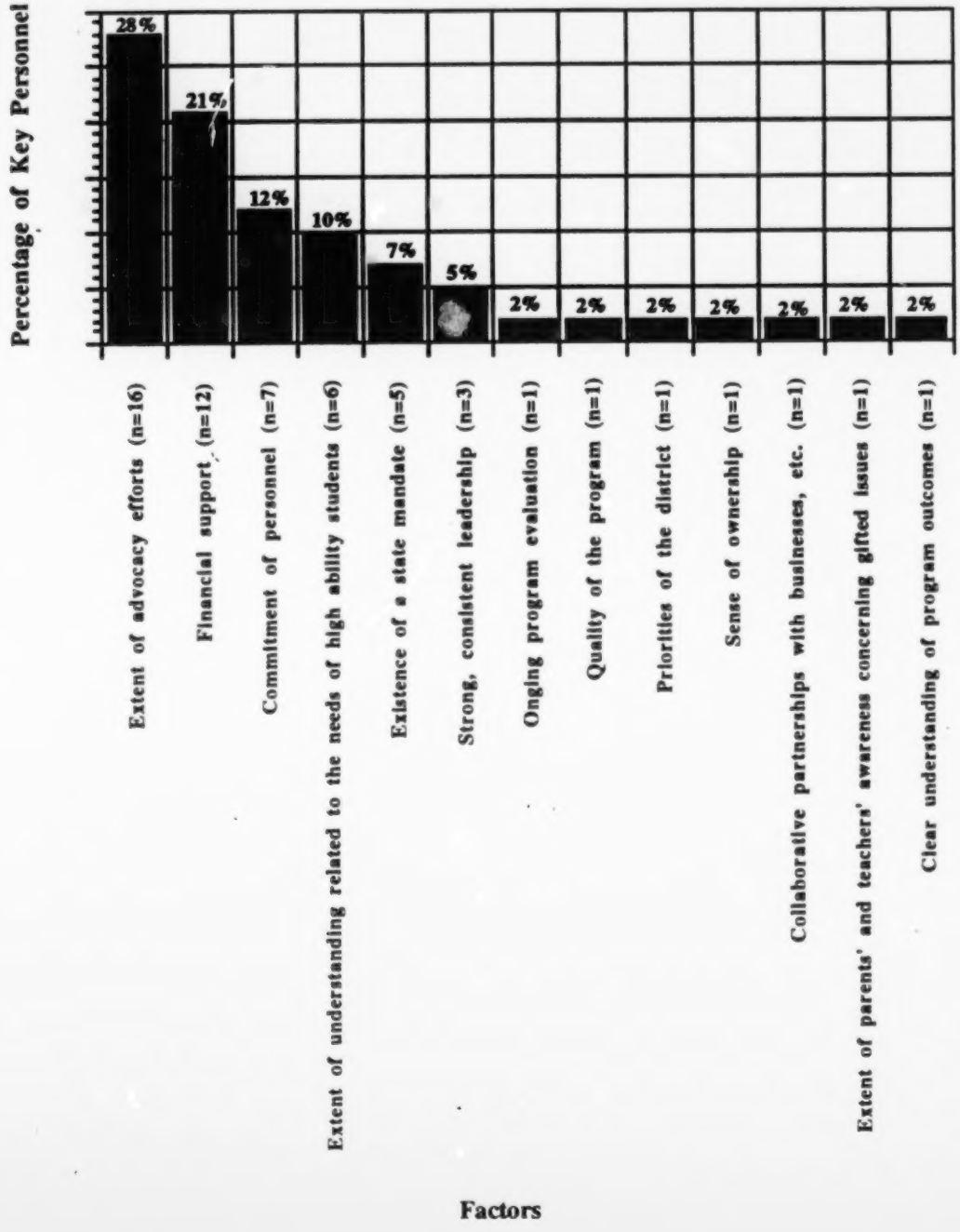
Question #1: What Factors Are Associated With Programs That Are Currently Intact or Experiencing Growth?

Advocacy was the most frequently mentioned factor associated with program growth and stability, and 28% of all key personnel attributed advocacy efforts to programs in these status categories, as did 27%, 26%, 27%, and 31% of key personnel in Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4, respectively. Another 21% of all key personnel attributed the allocation of funds to program stability and growth, as did 27%, 11%, 27%, and 23% of key personnel in each group of states, respectively (see Figure 8).

Question #2: What Factors Are Associated With Programs That Have Been Reduced, Eliminated, or Threatened With Reduction/Elimination?

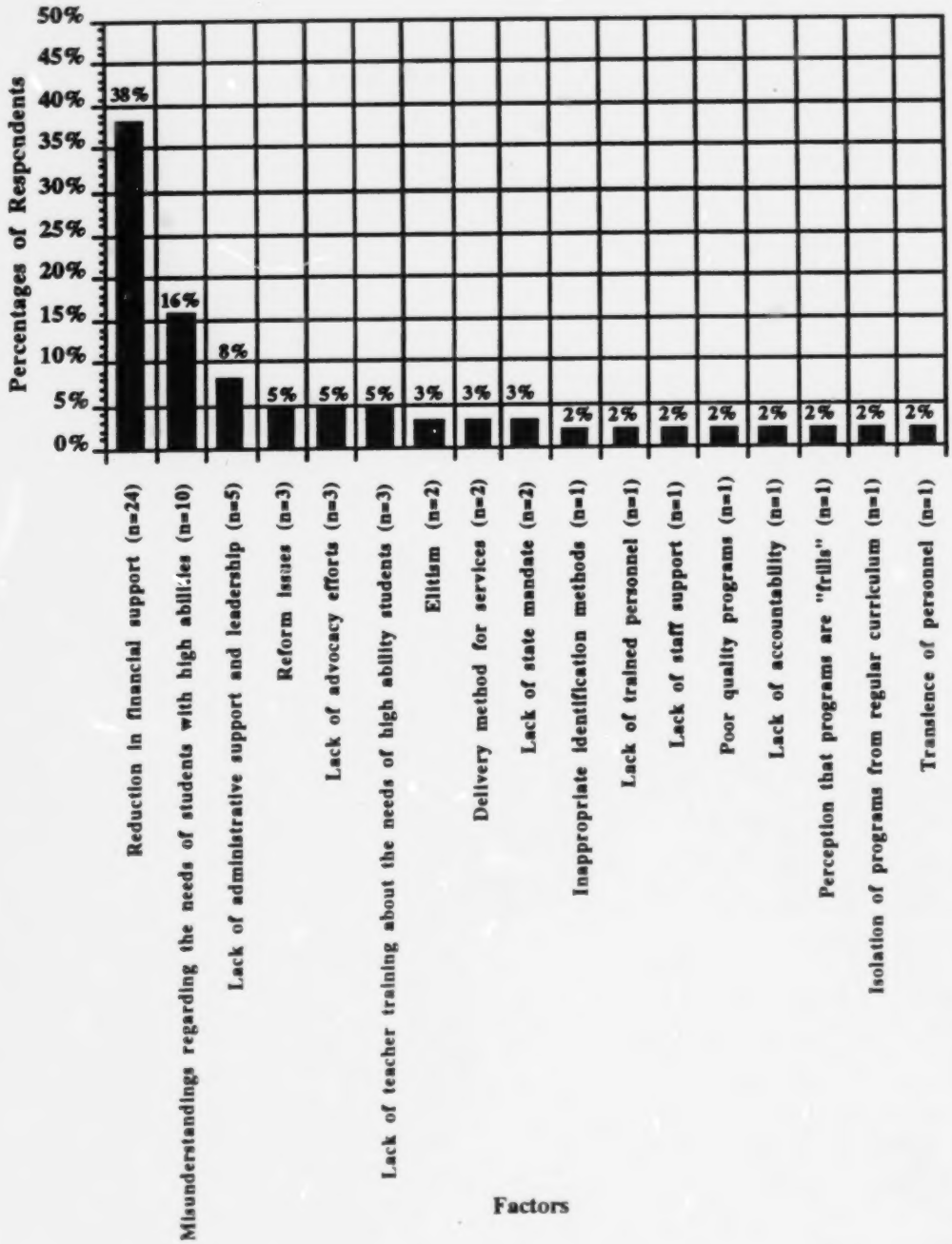
The most frequently mentioned factor associated with program jeopardy was the reduction of funds, and 38% of all key personnel attributed a reduction in financial support to the jeopardy experienced by programs for students with high abilities (see Figure 9). This pattern was reflected in the 40%, 31%, 43%, and 47% of key personnel who identified the same factor in each category of states, respectively. A smaller percentage of all respondents attributed the reduction and elimination of these programs to misunderstandings related to the needs of students with high abilities, but this factor was not identified consistently by personnel in each category of states. Although 27%, 19%, and 14% of personnel in Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3 identified this factor as associated with program jeopardy, only 6% of personnel in Group 4 attributed this factor to program reduction and elimination.

Figure 8. **Perceptions of Key Respondents (n=32) Related to the Factors Associated With the Expansion and Stability of Programs for Students With High Abilities ***



* Responses do not total 100% because key personnel could provide multiple responses.

Figure 9. **Perceptions of Key Respondents (n=32) Related to the Factors Associated With the Reduction and Elimination of Programs for Students With High Abilities***



* Responses do not total 100% because key personnel could provide multiple responses.

Question #3: What Will Happen to the Status of Programs in Five Years?

A very small percentage of key personnel (3%) believed that programs for students with high abilities will remain at their current level and in their present form over the next five years. The largest percentage of respondents, 41%, believed that programs were currently unstable, and this large percentage of responses was reflected in each category of states. Twenty-five percent, 25%, 38%, and 50% of personnel in Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4, respectively, believed that the future of programs was uncertain. The progressively increasing number of respondents across categories reflected the uncertainty among personnel in states where the economy was poor and/or no mandate to provide services existed.

Some personnel from states in Group 1, Group 2, and almost half of personnel in Group 3 believed programs will expand. Of equal interest is the number of personnel who believed that programs will continue, but in another (albeit undefined) form. Thirty-eight percent of personnel in states without mandates and in poor economic health reported that programs will continue in another form, as did 25% of personnel in states from Group 1 and Group 2. Many personnel expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional "pull-out" method of delivery, and reported that alternatives were being sought. It is encouraging that solutions to these long-standing concerns were being sought in light of the fact that such large numbers of programs in these three categories of states have been threatened, reduced, and/or eliminated.

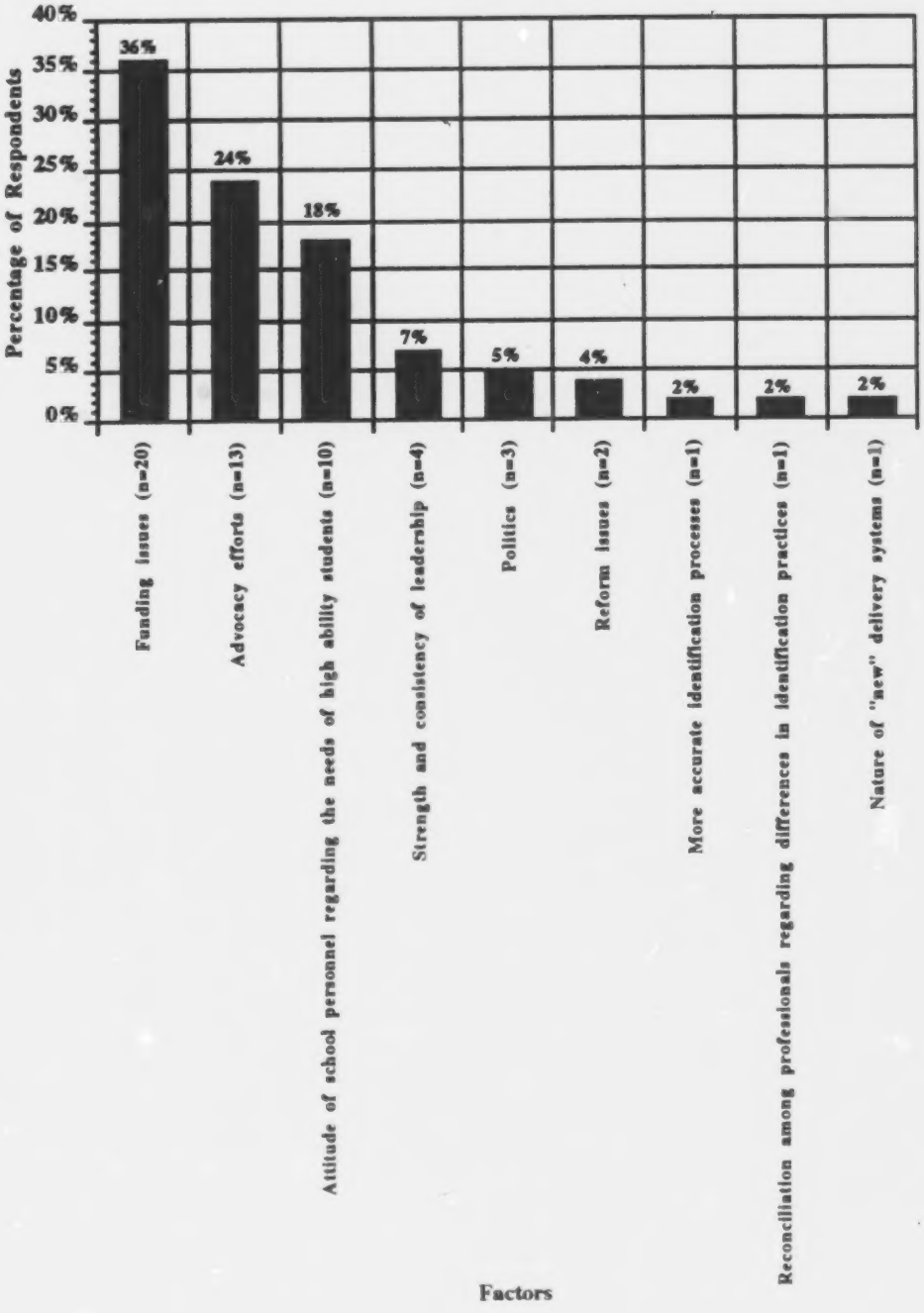
Question #4: What Factors Are Most Likely to Influence the Status of Programs in the Next Five Years?

Two factors were identified by key personnel as most likely to influence the status of programs for students with high abilities, and they emerged from the data provided by all respondents. These factors were also reflected in the data from each category of states, and they included the extent of funding allocated to programs and the extent of advocacy efforts, especially by parents of students with high abilities (see Figure 10).

Overall, the largest percentage of personnel (36%) believed that the amount of money allocated to programs, from local education associations and state and federal levels, would be most likely to influence the status of programs. Increases in funding, respondents concluded, would allow programs to expand and better meet the needs of students. This belief was reflected in similarly large percentages across the categories of states. Forty-two percent, 33%, 21%, and 47% of respondents from each group of states, respectively, believed funding was the most critical factor related to the status of programs.

Although the largest percentage of respondents reported money as the most important factor, a smaller percent of personnel, especially in Group 3, voiced a concern that money was not necessarily the answer to better programs. Personnel from Group 3 consistently reported that the strength and consistency of leadership was more important than increases in funding. A state director from Group 3 concluded, "We've had to get by for so long with so little that we've learned to be creative. We've come to depend more on our leadership and our vision of the way things should be."

Figure 10. **Perceptions of Key Respondents (n=32) Related to the Factors Associated With the Status of Programs for Students With High Abilities Over the Next Five Years***



* Responses do not total 100% because respondents could provide multiple responses.

The second factor identified by key personnel as most likely to influence the status of programs for students with high abilities over the next five years was the extent of advocacy efforts. Twenty-four percent of all respondents identified advocacy efforts, as did 21%, 25%, 43%, and 7% of respondents in Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4, respectively. The largest percentage of respondents who identified advocacy as a factor came from states in Group 3, whose key personnel reported that more money would not necessarily improve programs. "Doing more with less," concluded the advocate from West Virginia, "means relying more on advocacy." The lack of advocacy reported by respondents in Group 4 is also telling. With reduced funding and few advocacy efforts, it is little wonder that programs in Group 4 are experiencing jeopardy.

Finally, it is important to note that the majority of informants targeted parents as the most powerful advocates for students with high abilities. Superintendents most often spoke about the power that parents had to influence the status of programs at the local and state level. They believed that parents of students with high abilities were "articulate," "persuasive," and a "powerful force, especially during elections." Ironically, they also believed, as did other key personnel, that parents were frequently unaware of the power they possessed and, as a result, less likely to utilize it.

Question #5: Will the Extent of Funding for Programs Be Reduced, Remain as Is, or Increase in the Next Five Years?

Sixty-three percent of key personnel from states in Group 1 reported that funding for programs for students with high abilities would remain at their current levels, as did 75% of respondents from Group 4. Clearly, the majority of personnel in states where programs were stable and expanding believed finances would remain unchanged, as did personnel in states where the largest percentage of programs was jeopardized. While it is encouraging that financial support for programs in states with mandates and in good economic health will remain stable, it is discouraging that programs in states without mandates and in poor economic health may continue to be threatened, reduced, and eliminated. Nordheimer (1992), in a recent front page newspaper article in *The New York Times,* described threatened, reduced, and eliminated programs as "trimmed and gutted" (p. 1), and concluded that enrichment classes, honors classes, and other high-end learning opportunities intended to accelerate and enrich learning will continue to face setbacks.

Personnel in states from Group 2 and Group 3 were polarized on the issue of funding for programs in the future. Fifty percent of personnel from states in Group 2 believed funding would be reduced, while 63% of respondents from Group 3 believed funding would be increased. The optimism expressed by respondents in Group 3 may be an expression of the philosophical orientation, described earlier, that characterized personnel from this group of states: visionary and determined.

State directors were asked to supply additional data related to funding: the total amount of money allocated to gifted education in the 1991-1992 academic year and the total amount (projected) to be spent on programs for high ability students in 1992-1993. The results are presented in Table 2. Without question, the current data verifies Kane's (1983) assertion regarding the large growth in spending on these students in the middle and late 1980s. Growth slowed in the early 1990s and decreases in many states were anticipated for the 1992-1993 academic year. It is too early to tell what effect the projected declines in funding will have on programs for students with high abilities.

Table 2
Summary of Funding, by State, for Programs for Students With High Abilities, 1984-1993

State	1984[a]	1990	% chg	1991-1992[b]	% chg	1992-1993 (projected)	% chg (projected)
Group 1							
Alaska	na	$9,154,000		$9,392,000	+3	$9,392,000	0
Florida	$30,000,000	$87,989,649	+293	$121,693,278	+138	$121,619,267	-1
Utah	$500,348	$976,000	+195	$1,209,880	+24	$1,132,032	-7
Virginia	$4,210,700	$16,000,000	+179	$19,583,673	+22	$19,704,300	+0.6
				Average for Group 1, 1992-1993:		$30,599,520	
Group 2							
Idaho	na	na		na		na	
Indiana	$2,000,000	$5,002,600	+250	$5,903,741	+18	$5,903,741	0
Michigan	$830,000	$2,150,300	+259	$9,128,100	+425	$9,128,100	0
Missouri	$3,698,755	$15,000,000	+419	$16,865,980	+12	$16,249,207	-4
Nevada	$1,069,280	na		$4,063,084	+380	$3,859,930	-5
				Average for Group 2, 1992-1993:		$8,785,245	

[a] The data from 1984 and 1990 were taken from *The 1990 State of the States Gifted and Talented Education Report.*

[b] Different funding formulas are used in each state. The figures represent dollars allocated to programs for high ability students beyond per pupil costs.

Table 2
Summary of Funding, by State, for Programs for Students With High Abilities, 1984-1993 (Continued)

State	1984[a]	1990	% chg	1991-1992[b]	% chg	1992-1993 (projected)	% chg (projected)
Group 3							
Louisiana	na	na		na		na	
Maine	$2,000,000	$4,945,810	+247	$5,388,447	+9	$4,910,502	-10
Mississippi	$8,000,000	$13,446,000	+168	$18,000,000	+34	$18,000,000	0
Oregon	na	$6,768,154		$8,035,387	+15	$8,035,387	0
W. Virginia	na	na		$30,000,000		$30,000,000	0
				Average for Group 3, 1992-1993:		$11,186,472	
Group 4							
Connecticut	$12,000,000	$9,000,000	-25	$3,836,000	-235	0	-100
Delaware	$915,000	$2,197,000	+158	$1,500,000	-146	$1,500,000	0
New Mexico	na	na		$13,175,843		$13,175,843	0
N. Dakota	$192,058	$151,205	-21	$503,417	+333	$503,417	0
Wyoming	$150,000	$350,000	+233	$350,000	0	$350,000	0
				Average for Group 4, 1992-1993:		$3,105,852	

[a] The data from 1984 and 1990 were taken from *The 1990 State of the States Gifted and Talented Education Report.*

[b] Different funding formulas are used in each state. The figures represent dollars allocated to programs for high ability students beyond per pupil costs.

Question #6: In What Ways Can Programs Be Improved?

Key personnel identified ten different ways programs for students with high abilities can be improved, and the ten different ways were collapsed into 6 categories (see Table 3). The six categories included: increased expertise among educators about students with high abilities; expansion of the knowledge base related to giftedness and talent development; the development of new, more challenging curriculum; administrative changes related to school scheduling and methods of program delivery; the allocation of more funds; and the increase of advocacy efforts. The most frequently mentioned improvement concerned the need for more teacher inservice related to the needs of high ability children. Eleven key personnel indicated that inservice and preservice were essential to help teachers deal more effectively with the needs of these students, and these 11 responses represented 20% of all responses. Ten key personnel reported that the way services were delivered to students needed to be examined and changed (i.e., no more pull-out), and these responses represented 19% of the total responses.

Surprisingly, the methods reported by respondents as ways to improve programs were unrelated to the factors identified by respondents that contributed to program growth and stability (question 1) and factors that would affect programs in the next five years (question 4). In answers to question 1 and question 4, respondents indicated that advocacy efforts contributed significantly to program growth and stability and reported that advocacy would be a key factor in the future of programs for students with high abilities. Yet, advocacy was only mentioned by four key personnel as a way to improve programs for these students. It is believed that key personnel interpreted question 6 (i.e., In what ways can programs be improved?) to be concerned specifically with improving program components and program organization.

To conclude, three important findings emerged from Phase II of The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993a). First, data from key personnel related to the factors which contribute to program stability and growth confirmed the data provided by local personnel in Phase I of the research. Specifically, key personnel (Phase II) most frequently attributed advocacy efforts to program stability and growth, as did 46% of local personnel (Phase I) from states in Group 2 and Group 4. The existence of a state mandate, attributed by over two thirds of local personnel in Group 1 and Group 3 to program growth and stability, did not feature prominently in the data from key personnel.

Second, key personnel (Phase II) most frequently attributed a reduction in financial support to threatened, reduced, and eliminated programs, thereby supporting the findings from local personnel. Thirty-nine percent of key personnel and almost half of local personnel, across all categories of states, attributed the jeopardized status of programs to reductions in state and local funds. The consistency with which over 1600 respondents in Phase I and Phase II of the present research associated funding issues with program jeopardy casts additional doubt on theories which claim that programs for students with high abilities are being eliminated from "coast-to-coast" because of racial bias and/or decisions related to educational reform, specifically the grouping issue. It seems reasonable to conclude from the data that the national retrenchment in gifted education is, for the most part, the result of a weakened economy and not the result of changing educational philosophies.

Table 3

Categories and Frequency of Strategies Identified by Key Personnel to Improve Programs for High Ability Students

Category	Frequency	
	Number of responses	% of all responses*
1. Improving expertise		
More inservice about the needs of high ability students	11	20
2. Expansion of the knowledge base related to giftedness		
Development of new, more effective service delivery methods	10	19
Improved identification techniques	6	11
3. Curricular issues		
Development of challenging, interdisciplinary curriculum units	6	11
Increased use of technology	1	2
4. Program/School administration		
Time for joint planning with classroom teachers and members of the community	6	11
More flexible use of school hours (e.g., longer blocks of instructional time)	6	11
More effective leadership	1	2
5. Allocation of more funds	4	7
6. Expansion of advocacy efforts	4	7

*Percentages have been rounded

It is important to note the longevity of the problem with funding that has plagued programs for students with high abilities. Over two decades ago, Martinson (in Marland, 1972) concluded that funding was a major deterrent to programming for these students:

> One of the most significant survey questions [State Survey] dealt with the reasons for limited resources for the gifted: What are the specific forces that the States see holding back a more extensive operation? The differences between the various regions were not significant. The problems were seen as the same, or extremely similar, from one region to the next....The major deterrent, clearly was the lack of sufficient funds to carry out significant program activity. The kinds of financial resources necessary to implement legislative intent are just not being allocated at the State level. The second, and related, deterrent is the pressure of other more crisis-oriented priorities....Little or nothing was left over for significant but long-term problems that did not create immediate administrative crises–problems like the education of the gifted. (pp. 48-49)

Clearly, funding has been a problem that has plagued the field of gifted education even before Sputnik (Bestor, 1953; Mead, 1954), and during the 1970s Tannenbaum (1972) compared students with high abilities to ornaments: they are detached and discarded when the cost becomes prohibitive. The present data indicate that funding for programs for these students in many states is no longer the priority it once was and that the achievement potential of many high ability students is being "detached and discarded."

Third, attitudes and beliefs of key personnel surfaced during the interviews and contributed to the portrait of state and district services provided to students with high abilities. In the majority of cases, data from the interviews (Phase II) confirmed the data provided by personnel in The Advocacy Survey (Phase I). In several cases, however, the data provided by key personnel contradicted the information provided by local personnel. For example, local personnel in Alaska (Group 1) indicated that 84% of district programs were expanded or intact. Nevertheless, interviews with key personnel in Alaska indicated that funding for programs at the state level was going to be separated from funding for special education in 1992-1993, that the funding and planning of programs would become a local issue, and that it was the hope of state legislators (as perceived by key personnel) that programs for students with high abilities would "die a natural death." Contradictory evidence between local and key personnel was also found in states from Group 3 and Group 4: Mississippi, North Dakota, and West Virginia. In North Dakota, local personnel surveyed reported that 57% of districts never had programs for students with high abilities. The state director and parent advocate from this state believed that the needs of all students were going to be met as the result of a "new curriculum initiative" being planned to challenge all students, including those at the upper end of the ability continuum. In Mississippi, where full implementation of a state mandate to provide educational services to students with high abilities was delayed for one year and one quarter of respondents reported programs as threatened, all key personnel believed that programs for students with high abilities would be restored to their original level of service. Districts were currently "moving ahead at full speed" to inservice administrators and faculty members about identification procedures and techniques for meeting the needs of high ability students in the regular classroom. Furthermore, greater efforts were being made at the local and state level to educate legislators with respect to the special needs of these students. Finally, the state director in West Virginia, where over one third (36%) of programs experienced jeopardy, concluded that educators in her state now realize "that the traditional ways of educating students with high abilities have become a barrier to these students' education," and that momentum was building among all educators to provide individualized education programs to all students, including those

with high abilities. While some of the contradictory evidence reported by personnel from states in Group 1 may portent increasing uncertainty and reductions for programs for students with high abilities, the contradictory data reported by personnel from states in Group 3 and Group 4 may provide new leadership and establish new directions for educational services for students with high abilities.

To summarize, the results from Phase I of the research indicated that the status of programs for students with high abilities, as well as the comprehensiveness of programs, are associated with the existence of a state mandate to provide services, funding issues, and advocacy. The majority of respondents who reported programs as expanded or intact attributed the status of programs to the existence of a state mandate and advocacy efforts by support groups. The majority of respondents who reported programs as reduced, eliminated, or threatened with reduction and/or elimination attributed the jeopardy to funding reductions at the state and local level, as well as advocacy efforts, indicating that support from parents and others saved programs from being threatened and/or reduced more than they were in the 1991-1992 academic year.

For the most part, the results from Phase II of the research confirmed the results that emerged from Phase I; namely, advocacy was perceived as associated with program growth and stability, and reductions in funding were most associated with programs that experienced jeopardy. In most cases, the portrait of state services supplied by key personnel confirmed and elaborated upon the information provided by local personnel in The Advocacy Survey. In one state from Group 1, however, that information from local and key personnel was contradictory, indicating that programs for students with high abilities in Alaska were in more jeopardy than local personnel realized. In three other states from Group 3 and Group 4, contradictory information indicated that educational initiatives had been designed by those in state departments of education to better meet the needs of high ability students. These initiatives, however, had not been implemented at the district level and, accordingly, their effect had not been perceived by local personnel.

Summary and Conclusions

This study investigated the multiple beliefs or factors associated with the status of programs for students with high abilities in a sample of 19 states. The research was conducted in two phases. In Phase I, local respondents were asked to complete The Advocacy Survey, and in Phase II, key personnel were interviewed using The Advocacy Questionnaire. The survey and questionnaire were developed around the same three research questions:

1. What is the current status (i.e., expanded; reduced; eliminated; threatened by reduction and/or elimination, but intact; intact) of programs for high ability students in a purposeful sample of 19 states?
2. To what cause(s) do local representatives from school systems attribute the current status of programs for students with high abilities?
3. What is the perception of key respondents (i.e., state directors, heads of state parent organizations for the gifted, school superintendents, chairpersons of boards of education) from the same 19 states regarding which factors (e.g., policy, economic condition, misunderstandings regarding the needs of students with high abilities) led to the retention and elimination of programs for these students?

Important findings emerged from the research in two major categories: the status of programs for students with high abilities and the reasons attributed to program status by local respondents and key personnel. The major conclusions are summarized below and are organized according to the two major categories of findings.

Program Status

The data gathered during Phase I suggest that the existence of a state mandate to provide services to students with high abilities and good state economic health are associated with the status of programs for these students. Existing programs in states without mandates and in poor economic health are being threatened, reduced, and eliminated in high numbers; specifically, whereas 15% of programs were reported in these status categories by respondents from Group 1 (good economic health with a mandate), 29% of respondents in states from Group 4 (poor economic health, but without a state mandate) reported programs as threatened, reduced, or eliminated. Furthermore, high numbers of respondents from Group 4 reported that programs for these students had never existed. Only 3% of respondents reported that programs had never existed in Group 1; almost one quarter (24%) of respondents from Group 4 reported that programs for high ability students had never existed.

The data from Phase I further suggest that state economic health and the existence of a state mandate to provide services to high ability students are also associated with the comprehensiveness of programs. Respondents indicated that districts from states in Group 1 provided the most comprehensive programs; 90% of districts provided programs to students grades three through eight, approximately 70% of districts provided programs to students in kindergarten, about 80% provided services to students enrolled in grades nine to twelve, and about 10% of pre-K students received services. Respondents indicated that districts in states from Group 4 provided the least comprehensive services. Only 60% of these districts provided services to students grades four through six, about 30% provided services to students kindergarten through grade three, and fewer that 35% provided services to students in their last four years of public school. Services to students pre-K did not exist, according to respondents from states in Group 4.

Reasons Attributed to Program Status

States With Mandates to Provide Services to High Ability Students

Understandably, the majority of respondents in Group 1 and Group 3 reporting programs in secure status categories attributed the status to the existence of a state mandate. A smaller, but substantial, percentage of respondents reporting these status categories attributed the program status to advocacy efforts. Smaller percentages of respondents from Group 1 and Group 3 reporting programs as jeopardized attributed the status to advocacy efforts. Eight percent of respondents from Group 1 and 18% of respondents from Group 3 double dipped to indicate that advocacy efforts had saved programs from being jeopardized to a greater extent than they were in the 1991-1992 academic year.

Less state and local funds were the reasons most frequently attributed to programs experiencing jeopardy in Group 1 and Group 3. Twenty-nine percent of respondents from Group 1 and 48% from Group 3 attributed their jeopardy to a reduction in funding.

States Without Mandates to Provide Services to High Ability Students

Large percentages of respondents from states without mandates attributed advocacy efforts as the primary reason associated with program status. Identical percentages (46%) of respondents from Group 2 and Group 4 who reported programs in secure status categories attributed the status to advocacy efforts. About one fifth (18% and 21%, respectively) of respondents reporting programs in jeopardized status categories attributed the status to advocacy efforts.

The findings from key personnel related to advocacy triangulated the findings from local personnel. According to the data provided by key personnel, advocacy was the most frequently mentioned factor associated with program growth and stability in all categories of states and across group membership. Furthermore, key personnel identified advocacy, second only to increases in funding, as most likely to influence the status of programs for high ability students over the next five years. Less state and local funds were the reasons most frequently attributed to programs experiencing jeopardy in Group 2 and Group 4. Forty-eight percent of respondents from Group 2 and 41% of respondents from Group 4 who reported programs experiencing jeopardy in 1991-1992, attributed the jeopardy to a reduction in funds.

The reasons attributed to program jeopardy by key personnel were similar to the reasons attributed by local personnel to program jeopardy. Thirty-nine percent of all key personnel attributed a reduction in financial support to the difficulty experienced by programs for students with high abilities. Additionally, key personnel most frequently reported funding as the factor most likely to influence the status of programs for these students over the next five years. Thirty-six percent of key personnel, across all categories of states, believed funding would be the most critical factor affecting programs in the years ahead. To summarize, the consistency with which local personnel from all four groups of states identified financial reasons for program jeopardy, and the triangulation of this finding by the data from key respondents sends a clear statement to those who believe the retrenchment in programs for high ability students is due to racial bias and/or changing educational philosophies, especially with regard to the grouping issue. The current data simply does not support the latter two hypotheses.

Implications of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Seven important implications emerged from The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993a), including the need for: continued research related to the status of programs for students with high abilities, an understanding of the factors associated with the retention and elimination of programs for students with high abilities, new research initiatives to examine the extent of underachievement among these students, research to examine the effect of program jeopardy on the field and the number of trained teachers, evaluation of new program initiatives being undertaken in states participating in the research, and more communication between state officials and local personnel regarding policies related to the education of students with high abilities. Each of these is discussed below.

The Emerging National Picture From the Local Perspective

The present research provided a national portrait of the status of programs for students with high abilities in a sample of 19 states. While the research provided encouraging data with respect to local programs in states with mandates and in good economic health, it also provided discouraging data with respect to the status of programs in the other three categories of states. Programs in states from Group 2, Group 3, and

Group 4 were jeopardized in increasing numbers. It seems reasonable to conclude from the local data that students with high abilities and the programs that serve them are not yet at the threshold of renewed national interest. The present data indicate that, increasingly, the needs of many high ability students are no longer a priority in school districts. Data from other national research (Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Zhang, & Emmons, 1993; Feldhusen, 1989; Singal, 1991; Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, & Salvin, 1993) suggest that these students' needs are being overlooked, even forgotten, in classrooms; not only are district-wide programs designed to serve these students being reduced and eliminated, but also few opportunities exist in classrooms for them to progress at a rate commensurate with their abilities.

Two research initiatives are necessary. First, research related to the status of programs in the remaining 31 states and U.S. territories is necessary because the results presented here cannot be generalized beyond the states in the sample. What percentage of programs has expanded or remained intact in states with mandates and in good economic health that did not participate in the current research? Are programs in the remaining states and territories without mandates and in poor economic health being threatened, reduced, and eliminated in similar proportions? Clearly, data from states and territories not in the present sample may provide verification for the present data and/or reveal other trends. Accordingly, it is essential that additional data be gathered.

Second, annual research, similar to the current research and conducted at the state level by advocates, is needed to monitor changes in the base line established by the current findings and to better understand the fluctuations that affect programs for high ability students. Most important, current data and trends related to the status of programs for high ability students can be used by advocates as powerful information to alert educators and officials to changes in the status of programs that may require action. Without data related to the status of programs, policy makers have little information, or reason, to redesign educational initiatives for high ability students.

Factors Associated With the Elimination and Retention of Programs

Three primary factors emerged from the data as factors that influence the retention and elimination of programs for students with high abilities and include: the existence of a state mandate, the reduction of financial resources, and advocacy. According to the local personnel in this study, state mandates maintain programs. Local and key personnel perceive that reductions in funding at the state and local level contribute to program jeopardy.

Mandates

Miller and Sabatino's (1982) findings with respect to the most significant variables explaining the level of services to students with high abilities were verified by the current research. These two researchers concluded that the existence of a state mandate to provide services was a significant predictor of the level of state services, as well as the amount of funding allocated to programs for these students. The primary factor associated with program stability and growth by over two thirds of local respondents in the current research was the existence of a state mandate. Local and key personnel, including superintendents and board chairpersons, did not perceive that mandates usurped local control; local personnel from Group 1 and Group 3 believed that mandates saved programs from being "trimmed and gutted" (Nordheimer, 1993). Although many may continue to caution against the use of mandates, large percentages of the 1580 respondents in this study, at the local level and in leadership positions, reported that programs that served students with high abilities were vulnerable to social forces unrelated to these students' educational well-being. Put simply, the data from

respondents indicate that mandates may be one of the only ways to protect the existence of programs that provide appropriate educational opportunities for high potential students. Without question, the data from the current research warrant a reexamination of the need for state mandates to provide appropriate educational services for high ability students.

Dettmer (1988) observed the sense of permanency associated with mandates and concluded that "states tend not to rescind mandates once they are in effect" (p. 14). The current research indicates that mandates are not as permanent as once thought. Sixty percent of mandates and mandate initiatives (3 out of 5 states in Group 3) were threatened in states with poor economic climates in this sample, and the sole factor associated with this threatened status by local and key personnel was state fiscal crises. Over a decade ago, Mitchell (1981) articulated clearly the tentative nature of mandates to provide services to children with high abilities, and she concluded mandates were like matches. "They can ignite commitment to serving gifted and talented youth, but their effect will be short-lived unless they are fueled by additional support" (p. 12). The current research supported Mitchell's conclusion: that mandates will be successful only if program support is monitored and adjusted appropriately after the mandate has become law. Accordingly, the data from this study serve as a caution to complacency among advocates for high achieving students, even in states where mandates exist. Currently, some state mandates are in jeopardy; they are being compromised, even rescinded. While advocacy is important to the well-being of educational services to high potential students in good economic times, it is a critical factor in economically troubled times. Clearly, research is needed to identify not only the different levels of advocacy (e.g., classroom, building, district, state), but also which advocacy strategies (e.g., dialogue, letter writing, phone campaigns) are most effective at each level.

Funding

The factor most associated with program jeopardy in the current research was reduction in program funding at the state and local level. This finding verifies the connection between funding and appropriate services for students with needs beyond what is normally provided in classrooms which Thomas (1973) articulated 20 years ago in the title of her article, "Funding: Without Which There is no Special Education," and the connection between funding and program status established by Purcell (1992). According to the largest percentage of respondents across categories of states and group membership, the most important factor with respect to program jeopardy in the current study was the amount of money eliminated from program budgets. Put simply, the present research indicates that money was most often attributed to the jeopardy experienced by programs; money drove policy which, in turn, shaped programs.

The most recent figures regarding state funding allocated to programs and services for these students are cause for serious concern among those interested in maintaining programs for high ability students, and are an additional reason to revitalize advocacy efforts on behalf of high ability children. The reduction in financial support that has occurred in many states is a statement that the needs of high ability students are no longer the priority they were 5 to 10 years ago. In states without mandates and/or in poor economic health, services for high ability students are being chipped away, and programs compromised by such annual, successive reductions will find it increasingly difficult to maintain quality services. Eventually, programs that are chipped away year after year "die a natural death" because educational provisions are no longer substantial enough to be beneficial (Purcell, 1992). The local and key personnel in this study have sent a clear message for increased advocacy from those interested in the education of students with high abilities. As a result of financial exigencies, they believe that large

numbers of local programs for high ability students are precariously balanced between existence and extinction.

Advocacy

Advocacy emerged as one of the most positive forces affecting programs for students with high abilities in states with and without mandates, and data from interviews with key personnel indicated that some of the most powerful advocates were parents of high ability students. States with a strong advocacy constituency need to maintain their efforts; states without a strong advocacy base need to organize interested parents, teachers, and administrators to develop a systematic plan for advocacy that will encourage stability and growth of quality programs for these students. Without a resurgence of strong advocacy efforts, many key personnel fear the loss of programs for high ability students.

Research indicates that advocacy is a powerful force which can drive programs for high ability students; however, little else is known about advocacy. Accordingly, more empirical research about the nature of advocacy needs to be conducted to answer questions such as the following, for example: What types of advocacy are most effective in establishing programs for high ability students? What types of advocacy efforts are most helpful when programs for these students are threatened? What are the differences between effective strategies at the local level and effective strategies at the state and federal level?

The Underachievement of Students With High Abilities

What are the effects of program elimination on students once served? Little empirical research exists that examines this question. Purcell (1993b) examined parental perception of the effects of program elimination of their children, grades 2-6, in one New England community. Parents reported that many of their children were experiencing not only a decline in their desire to achieve at the high levels expected of them when the program for high ability students existed, but also that many were experiencing a spectrum of difficulties related to the regular curriculum. The spectrum of effects included: disappointment, frustration, boredom with the traditional curriculum, withdrawal from class participation, disruptive behavior, and total academic demotivation.

What remains for these students in the classroom? Research (Reis & Purcell, 1993; Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, & Salvin, 1993) indicates that little remains. Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, and Salvin conducted observations in 92 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms around the country and concluded that no differentiation occurred in 84% of classroom activities for high ability students. Reis and Purcell (1993) reported that, on average, 40%-50% of regular classroom instruction for high ability students could be eliminated before it was taught because students already knew the material. Put simply, little remains in many schools to motivate students with high abilities. Accordingly, more research needs to be conducted to determine the extent to which high ability students are underachieving with respect to their potential. Additionally, more research needs to be conducted to identify successful classroom practices. Once successful practices are identified, they can be disseminated to educators through preservice and staff development to better serve all learners, including those with high abilities.

Qualified Personnel in the Field

No research studies were found that examined the effect of program reductions and eliminations on teachers of high ability students and the field. Specifically, what are the effects of recurring program jeopardy on teachers of high ability students? Additionally, what is the effect of current instability in the field on the number of personnel seeking training in education of the gifted? Accordingly, research needs to be conducted that examines the effect of program instability at the local level on teachers of high ability students and the field.

Monitoring of New Initiatives

Only 3% of key personnel believed that programs for students with high abilities will remain in their present form; 97% of key personnel indicated that changes in programs were underway. Without question, the field of gifted and talented education is in a state of flux, and the outcome is unknown at this time.

The present research also indicated that leadership and vision existed among key personnel in some states. Key personnel are reexamining the definition of high ability students and focusing, more so than in the past, on talent development in all children. Furthermore, key personnel are reevaluating the multiplicity of factors which contribute to the learning experience, as well as the importance of the products and their assessment to the learning experience This new vision is powerful enough to galvanize not only advocates for high ability students, but also advocates for students at all levels on the ability continuum. In the current research, evidence of this new vision was especially apparent in states where economic health was poor and "necessity had become the mother of invention." New educational initiatives were being drafted in these states to develop the talents and abilities of all students in new schoolwide programs and in individual classrooms, and key personnel expressed the hope that the needs of high potential children would be met through these new initiatives. It is essential to monitor the visions and educational initiatives that emerge in all states, evaluate the degree to which the visions and initiatives meet with success, and disseminate the most successful practices to others in the field.

Communication Between State Officials and Local Personnel

The current research indicated that substantial percentages of personnel in states without mandates believed that mandates did exist to provide services to students with high abilities. It is dismaying that personnel most responsible for delivering direct services to high potential students were confused about the educational statutes governing the delivery of educational services to these children. Without an accurate understanding of state regulations, professional educators may be failing to identify appropriate populations, to provide minimally acceptable programs for students, to use appropriate standards to evaluate programs designed for them, and to organize and support needed advocacy initiatives for high ability students. State directors need to determine the level and accuracy of local personnel's understanding of state law with respect to services for high potential students and ensure that identification, programming, and program evaluation are conducted in accordance with the law.

Guidelines and Research Support

The following are guidelines which can be drawn from data provided by The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993a). It is important to note that the data represent findings from the 19 states sampled, and accordingly may provide a slightly different picture than if all 50 states had been surveyed.

Guideline 1: Advocacy efforts in states in good economic health with mandates need to be maintained.

Research Support: Programs for high ability students in states in good economic health with state mandates to provide services to students with high ability are, for the most part, stable and expanding.

Guideline 2: Advocacy efforts need to be increased in states in poor economic health and/or where mandates do not exist. Advocacy for high ability students must occur with classroom teachers, building administrators, local board of education members, and legislators and executive officers at the state level.

Research Support: Programs for students with high abilities in states in all other categories are being threatened, reduced, and eliminated in higher numbers. Key personnel triangulated this finding; three-fourths of them believed that the future of programs for high ability students was unstable and/or likely to be jeopardized.

Guideline 3: Advocates for high ability children who want to maintain state mandates need to direct a large proportion of their efforts toward policy makers in the legislative and executive branches of their state government.

Research Support: The reason most frequently associated with stable and expanding programs by local personnel in states *with* mandates was the existence of a state mandate.

Guideline 4: Advocates in states without mandates need to direct their efforts toward policy makers.

Research Support: The reason most associated with program stability and expansion in states *without* mandates was advocacy. Four levels of advocacy should be maintained: the classroom level with teachers, the building level with administrators, the local or district level with board of education members, and the state level with policy makers in the legislative and executive branches of government. Regardless of the group targeted for lobbying efforts, the following strategies, carefully planned and orchestrated by interested parents, teachers and/or students, have proven effective: personal letters, group-sponsored letters, personalized information packets, newsletters, newspaper editorials, letters to the editor, news articles, petitions, personal phone conversations, personal visits or meetings, small group meetings, radio or TV talk shows, press breakfasts, and/or luncheons.

Guideline 5: Decisions to modify or eliminate programs for high achieving students should be based on (1) research and (2) a thorough analysis of the effectiveness of a program at the school and district level. Decisions regarding the status of programs should not be based on trends which may not be supported by research.

Research Support: The reason most frequently attributed to program jeopardy across all local and key personnel was reduction in funding at the state and local level. For the most part, the reform movement was not cited as a reason for the retrenchment in programs for high ability students.

Guideline 6: Policy makers need to plan and articulate more comprehensive services for children with high abilities.

Research Support: Districts with programs for high ability students do not provide comprehensive (Pre-K-12) services.

Questions Most Frequently Asked by Parents and Policy Makers

1. What is the likelihood that the program for high ability students in my district will be threatened, reduced, or eliminated?

The data from The Program Status Research Study (Purcell, 1993a) indicated that programs in states in poor economic health or without a mandate to provide educational services are more likely to be jeopardized than those programs in good economic health and with a mandate. Approximately one in four programs in states from Group 2 and Group 3 (i.e., states in good economic health without a mandate, states in poor economic health with a mandate) were affected. Programs in states without mandates and in poor economic climates (i.e., Group 4) were most likely to be affected; approximately one in three programs in these states was affected.

2. Are threatened and/or reduced programs eventually eliminated?

Not necessarily. A threatened program indicates, however, that a group with power (e.g., administrators, parents, local officials) questions the value of program services. Sustained efforts are necessary, directed especially to those who may not understand the needs of students with high abilities, if the program is to survive. Sustained efforts should include personal contact and presentations by parents and teachers about the characteristics and educational needs of high ability students.

It is also important to note that programs are not always threatened or reduced before they are eliminated; some programs have been eliminated without a prior history of jeopardizing situations. Thus, public relations and vigilance are essential to all programs for high ability students, but especially in states without mandates and in poor economic health.

3. What can I do to help ensure that the program for high ability students in my district will not be threatened, reduced, or eliminated?

A variety of strategies exist which can be used by teachers, administrators, and parents of high ability students to reduce the possibility that the program for high ability students will be jeopardized. These include:

a. Induce the district's board of education to adopt a district policy regarding the needs of high ability students. This policy is absolutely essential because it provides the foundation upon which programs are built. Districts without policies will want to establish teams made up of teachers, parents, administrators, and board of education members to prepare this document. Appendix B provides examples of two policies prepared by other districts which can be used as guidelines. It also contains two additional policies: one related to grouping and another related to acceleration. Both policies were adopted by the National Association for Gifted Children.

b. Establish a parent advocacy group. Made up of community members interested in the needs of high ability children, this group will become spokespersons for the program and the enrichment opportunities it can provide to the entire school. Additionally, this group may provide critical support during school budget hearings. The most effective advocacy groups meet regularly to cover topics of interest, including, for example: myths about high ability children, the rights of high ability children and

state law, grouping and the needs of high ability children, the social and emotional needs of the highly able, college and career planning for exceptional children, and the needs of high achieving females. A model of a constitution for an advocacy group can be found in *Gifted Children and Legal Issues in Education: Parents' Stories of Hope* (Karnes & Marquardt, 1991).

c. Provide workshops to faculty and board members on a regular basis. In many cases, community members are not so much against programs for high ability children as they are ignorant and misinformed about these students' needs. And because new faculty are hired and new board members are elected, it is essential that information about the educational needs of these children be provided even if workshops have been presented previously. These workshops can be especially meaningful if slides of program activities and information about student projects already completed or in progress can be shared.

d. Use the word "gifted" with thoughtfulness. The term may be interpreted by many to have an elitist tone, and its use may result in backlash. Suitable alternatives with respect to nomenclature for these students include, for example: highly able, high ability students, academically advanced, or exceptional students.

e. Disseminate a regular newsletter about program activities to teachers, administrators, board of education members, and *all* parents in the community. Highlight and encourage participation and attendance of the town's citizens at suitable enrichment activities.

f. Keep up-to-date on research in the field by reading periodicals, speaking with the state director of gifted and talented education, or the staff of The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

4. Is there support for differentiated services for high ability students?

Over a century ago, educators recognized the need to differentiate curriculum for students with high abilities. The first systematic approach to providing specialized educational programs was initiated in the 1860s and 1870s by Dr. William T. Harris, who was superintendent of schools in St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Harris advocated acceleration for students with high potential in order to provide them with challenging educational experiences and prevent the development of boredom and habits of laziness.

The need for curricular provisions for high potential students surfaced prominently again in the 1950s with the launching of the Russian spacecraft, Sputnik. Alarmed that America was losing its competitive and technical edge, the federal government appropriated almost one billion dollars to develop talent among school children, especially in science, technology, and foreign languages. Curricular options for high ability students were emphasized, and although enrichment opportunities were stressed in the late 1950s, other efforts focused upon the effectiveness of several administrative designs for serving those with high abilities, such as ability grouping and acceleration.

The issuance of the Marland Report (Marland, 1972) 15 years after the launching of Sputnik was the cause of another resurgence of interest in high potential students and curricular options that differentiated for their needs. The Gifted and Talented Children's Act of 1978, federal legislation enacted as a result of the Marland Report's bleak findings, authorized grants expended solely to plan, establish, and operate programs and projects which (1) are designed to identify and to meet the special education and related needs of gifted and talented children, and (2) are of significant size, scope, and quality as to hold

reasonable promise of making substantial progress toward meeting those needs (Passow, 1979, p. 444).

Differentiated curricular options varied after the passage of The Gifted and Talented Children's Act of 1978. The vast majority of programs adapted content, instructional modes and/or pace, and the learning environment (Fox, 1979, p. 111).

Current information regarding the nature and extent of programming options for students with high abilities is *The 1990 State of the States Gifted and Talented Education Report* (Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, 1991), and 47 states, the District of Columbia, and 2 Trust Territories responded to requests for information for this document. According to the Council of the State Directors on the Gifted and Talented, 26 states mandate programs for students with high ability, 42 states make available state guidelines for the education of these students, 12 states require Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for students, and 25 states allow these students to enroll in school at an earlier age than usual.

Most recently, the publication of two additional documents provides further support for differentiated services for high ability students. First, Passow and Rudnitski (1994) concluded that the nature of curriculum differentiation is considered too broadly; it is perceived to consist of only two options: acceleration or enrichment. Rather than considering only two broad options, Passow and Rudnitski argue that more attention needs to be paid to individuals who possess different kinds and degrees of talent potential. Accordingly, he recommends that districts need to:

- Delineate goals for each identified student according to his/her area(s) of talent and exceptional interest and the multiplicity and diversity of human talents.
- Deal with the issues of curriculum content, scope and sequence, articulation, and integration as essential ingredients of curriculum design.
- Deal with issues of curricular balance, including questions of balance between the general/common curriculum and the specialized curriculum; the humanities and arts and science, mathematics and technology; acceleration and enrichment; cognitive and affective learning; individualized/independent study and group/cooperative learning so that simplistic, fragmented, and unarticulated curriculum planning is avoided.
- Provide flexibility that allows for individual growth and choice, including the right to choose not to continue participation.
- Plan for the use of new technologies—e.g., computer networks, satellite communications, interactive video, and lasers—as a means to extending and enriching learning resources.
- Plan for incorporating the learning opportunities in the community as a part of the student's overall curricular experiences. (Passow & Rudnitski, 1994, pp. 74-75)

Second, and of major importance, is the latest national report on the status of gifted and talented students, *National Excellence: The Case for Developing America's Talent* (United States Office of Education, 1993). Based upon the premise that the "United States is squandering one of its most precious resources–the gifts and talents of many of its students " (p. 1), the authors recommend that schools provide "more and better opportunities for...students to learn advanced materials and move at their own pace" (p. 2).

To summarize, the need for differentiated educational services for high ability students has been recognized by educators and researchers for over 125 years. Furthermore, the necessity to provide differentiated curricular options has also been acknowledged by federal and state policy makers who have appropriated special legislation and funding over the last four decades on behalf of these students and programs that serve them. Currently, appeals are being made by experts and researchers (Passow & Rudnitski, 1994; Renzulli, 1994) to differentiate the curriculum individually according to the talents possessed by individuals and small groups of students.

5. Why are programs for high ability students being threatened, reduced, or eliminated?

One of the most important findings of the current research concerns the reasons attributed to program jeopardy both by local personnel and key personnel. The reason most frequently associated with threatened, reduced, or eliminated programs was reduction in state and local funding. Thus, the data suggest that the retrenchment in education for high ability students is due, for the most part, to the current economic decline and not to a changing educational philosophy. Accordingly, it is critical that advocacy groups maintain a proactive stance at all times with respect to programming for high ability students, but especially during economically troubled months and years.

6. How can I build a comprehensive continuum of services for high ability students in my district?

Three steps can be undertaken to help ensure a continuum of services for high ability students as they progress through their 13 or 14 years of school:

a. Develop a written policy addressing the educational needs of students, Pre-K to 12. See Appendix B for examples of policy statements.

b. Begin now to develop a strong parental advocacy base in your district. One of the most consistent findings from key personnel in the current research with respect to advocacy emerged from school superintendents and boards of education chairpersons. Both believed that parents of high ability children were "articulate," "persuasive," and "powerful forces" especially during election years. Parent advocacy groups need to use their power to maximize the educational opportunities that can be made available to their children.

c. Become well-versed with the literature which addresses the needs of high ability children at either end of the public school continuum. Robinson (1987, 1993) and Roedell, Jackson, and Robinson (1980) explore the needs of high ability young children. The following researchers examine the needs of high ability secondary students: Callahan, 1979; Leroux, 1986; Maker, 1982; Passow, 1986; Reis, 1987; Renzulli & Reis, 1985; Willings, 1986.

7. What are the effects of program elimination on high ability students?

A paucity of empirical research exists on the effects of the elimination of programs for high ability students. One qualitative study (Purcell, 1993b) examined parental perceptions of the effects of the elimination of a program for high ability students on their children. Parents reported that their children no longer were motivated to achieve the high expectations formerly held for them when the program existed. Additionally, parents believed their children were experiencing difficulty with the regular curriculum; specifically, their children were detaching themselves from the traditional

program of studies. This difficulty was reflected in a spectrum of school-related behaviors, including: disappointment, increased frustration and boredom with the traditional curriculum, withdrawal from class participation, disruptive classroom behavior, and total academic demotivation.

Additionally, the process of elimination had a spectrum of effects on the parents of high ability students. Parents reported they were alienated by the members of the community, and many expressed feelings of discouragement and disenchantment with the educational system. More than half had seriously considered sending their children to a private or parochial school.

8. If programs for high ability students are eliminated, what alternatives exist to challenge high ability students who remain in the classroom?

The following strategies do not replace the quality time provided by well-designed and articulated programs. They do provide, however, alternatives when programs are no longer available.

Curriculum compacting is an instructional strategy which is designed to eliminate content that students already know and replace it with self-selected, real-world investigations. It can be used by classroom teachers and was recently the subject of research conducted by The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. In the recent year-long study, curriculum compacting was used by teachers, grades 2-6, and one of the most important findings was that teachers were able to eliminate approximately 45% of curriculum across content areas for students with high abilities they identified in their classrooms.

Other classroom strategies are available and include: (1) interest centers, (2) flexible grouping practices, and (3) acceleration. Teachers can create interest centers for their classroom to provide challenging enrichment and/or acceleration options across content areas. Topics for interest centers can stretch beyond the curriculum and provide open-ended activities from which children can choose. Flexible grouping practices can also provide challenging learning opportunities for students because they allow students to progress through material at a pace and depth that is commensurate with their ability. Students can be grouped within classes or across grades and classes by interest, ability, and/or skill level. Acceleration options are numerous and include, for example: early entrance to school, grade telescoping, concurrent enrollment in more than one building (e.g., junior high school and high school) or in college during the same academic year, subject acceleration, mentorships, and early admission to college.

System wide plans for enrichment can also be adopted when programs for high ability students are eliminated. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Renzulli & Reis, 1985) is a plan whereby enrichment opportunities are provided to all students in the school environment. The purpose of the enrichment opportunities is to promote the curiosity and task commitment necessary to sustain students' self-selected independent investigations.

It is important to note that advocacy for high ability students must not be abandoned during times of program retrenchment. When services for these students are contracted, it is critical that the needs of these students remain visible so that other challenging educational opportunities can be provided for them. Even though programs disappear, high ability students remain in classrooms with educational needs more acute than before the program was eliminated. Accordingly, parents of high ability students need to work more closely with classroom teachers to ensure appropriate educational

programs for their children. Additionally, parents must continue to attend local board of education meetings to communicate to local officials that the needs of high ability students are important and to offer encouragement and support for educational initiatives (e.g., the formulation of a district policy about high ability students, the formulation of a policy on acceleration, the establishment of a research committee to locate models to provide enrichment to all students) to better meet the needs of all students, including those with high abilities.

Finally, it is important for parents of high ability students to stay current with a bold initiative that is taking place in Sheridan, Wyoming, where the program for high ability students was eliminated several years ago. Since that time, community members have organized a nonprofit organization, Accelerated Challenging Education (ACE). The members of ACE have two goals: to seek approval from the Wyoming State Department of Education for a privately funded enrichment position in their district, and to raise sufficient funds to sustain the position. To obtain information related to this initiative, contact: Patricia Best, 1056 Long Drive, Sheridan, WY 82801 (307) 672-2495.

9. Where can I locate experts in the field?

Several avenues can be pursued to locate experts in the field of education for high ability students. First, state directors of gifted and talented education may be able to provide the names of nearby experts. A second source for the names of local experts is state universities and colleges. The final source is the national data base of experts, sorted by state and area of expertise, that has been compiled by The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. Information about consultants and/or the data base can be obtained by contacting the Research Center.

10. What kinds of advocacy are most effective?

At this time, empirical research does not provide an answer to this question. Experience tells us, however, that advocacy for high ability students must be ongoing; it cannot be a "knee-jerk" reaction when programs are jeopardized in some way. Continuous advocacy must occur on several levels, including:

- **the classroom level.** Ongoing dialogues between teachers and parents of high ability students promote communication about the child's needs and interests which can help ensure appropriately challenging educational opportunities.
- **the administrative level.** Parents need to let building administrators know how important challenging educational opportunities are to their child. Building administrators not only need to hear parental concerns, but also need to hear positive feedback about the good things that happen for all children, in their school, including high ability students.
- **the district level.** Parental representation at board of education meetings is critical because the presence of parents sends a clear message to elected officials that the needs of high ability students are important. Representation at all meetings ensures that parents are up-to-date on the current happenings within the school system and provides parents with an opportunity to praise the positive opportunities for their children, as well as voice their concerns.
- **the state level.** Parents and educators of high ability children must also press their concerns at the state level. Letters and postcards to state representatives are noticed, as are phone conversations and campaigns. Obviously, well-researched, well-stated letters and calls by large numbers

of advocates are more effective than form letters and printed cards with spaces for signatures. Additionally, packets containing carefully selected pieces of information about the educational needs of high ability students have been well-received by legislators in the past.

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Appendix A

The Advocacy Survey

Advocacy Survey
Please return to:
Jeanne Purcell
The University of Connecticut
The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented
362 Fairfield Road, U-7
Storrs, CT 06269-2007

Please read the instructions before each section, answer the questions and return in the enclosed postage paid envelope.

Section I. If your school district/parish currently has no program for the gifted, please complete the following section only, and then go to question 8.

1. In our district: (*Please check one.*)

___a program for the gifted has never existed
___a program for the gifted used to exist, but was eliminated since 1988
___we are planning to implement a gifted program in the 1992-1993 school year
___Other (please specify) _____

2. The reason(s) no program exists is because: (*Please rank order your responses; that is, place the number 1 next to the reason which contributes most to the current status of your program, and so forth through the number 8 which contributes least to the status of your program.*)

___there is no state mandate to program for gifted and talented students
___there has been a reduction of state aid for local gifted and talented programs
___funds for gifted and talented programs at the local level have been reduced
___there are misconceptions about programming and program outcomes
___lack of administrative support
___lack of sufficient advocacy from support groups (i.e., teachers, parents)
___policy decisions resulting from educational reform issues, such as the elimination of grouping
___misunderstandings about the needs of the gifted

Section II. If your school district/parish currently has a program for the gifted, please complete the following section and go on to question 8.

3. Please check **all** of the grade levels your program for the gifted presently serves.

___Pre-K	___Grade 3	___Grade 7	___Grade 11
___K	___Grade 4	___Grade 8	___Grade 12
___Grade 1	___Grade 5	___Grade 9	
___Grade 2	___Grade 6	___Grade 10	

4. Approximately how many students did you directly service in this school year?

_____

5. Please check the status of your program for the 1991-1992 school year. If necessary, please refer back to the yellow enclosure for definitions of the following categories. (*Check one answer only, please.*)

___expanded
___eliminated
___reduced
___threatened with elimination/reduction, but as is
___as is

6. If your program **expanded** or **remained intact**, to which of the following reason(s) would you attribute the status?(*Please rank order your responses; that is, place the number 1 next to the reason which contributes most to the current status of your program, and so forth through the number 4 which contributes least to the status of your program.*)

___existence of state policies which mandate programs for the gifted
___active support from advocacy groups (i.e., parents, teachers)
___increased funding from the state for local programs
___increased funding from the local education association for local programs

7. If your program was **eliminated, reduced or threatened with reduction and/or elimination** in the 1991-1992 school year, to which of the following reason(s) would you attribute the status? (*Please rank order your responses; that is, place the number 1 next to the reason which contributes most to the current status of your program, and so forth through the number 8 which contributes least to the status of your program.*)

___there is no state mandate to require programs for gifted and talented students
___there has been a reduction of state aid to local gifted and talented programs
___funds for gifted and talented programs at the local level have been reduced
___there are misconceptions about programming and program outcomes
___lack of administrative support
___lack of sufficient advocacy from support groups (i.e., teachers, parents)
___policy decisions resulting from educational reform issues, such as the elimination of grouping
___misunderstandings about the needs of the gifted

8. Please use the following space for additional comments related to the status of programs for the gifted in your state.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU <u>VERY MUCH</u> FOR YOUR TIME!

Appendix B

Exemplary Policy Statements

Sample #1: School Board Policy for High Ability Students*

The district shall provide services for high ability children at each school through site-based programs which are aligned with the district's mission statement, the goals of the program and the (*name of the district)* Board of Education policies.

I. Definition

"Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who, by virtue of outstanding capabilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society" (United States Office of Education).

II. Mission Statement

The program for high ability students in (*name of the district*) is designed for students whose intellectual capacity and aptitudes, rate of learning, and potential for creative contributions demand experiences apart from the regular curriculum. It provides diverse and appropriate learning experiences and environments which incorporate the academic, psychological, and social needs of the students. Students are provided educational alternatives throughout their years in the public system that teach, challenge and expand their knowledge while simultaneously stressing the development of an independent learner who can continuously question, apply and generate information. The (*name of the district*) Program is committed to the belief that every child possesses boundless potential, and to providing each identified child with guidance in discovering, developing and realizing his/her potential as an individual and as a member of society.

III. Goals

To attain this mission, the (*name of the district*) Program sets three goals with respect to educational programs for eligible students, and they are:

A. Appropriate Pacing

Appropriate pacing is defined as any provision that:

1. Places students at an appropriate instructional level, thereby creating the best possible match between the abilities of the student and the level of the instruction.
2. Allows students to move forward in the curriculum as they achieve mastery of content and skills, thereby providing continuous advancement and challenge.
3. Allows students to move beyond regular curriculum mastery into alternative activities and objectives.

B. Enrichment

This aspect of the educational program is designed to meet the needs of all students, not just those eligible for program services. The enrichment component may include:

1. Exploratory activities to expose students in the school to a variety of subjects/topics beyond the traditional curriculum
2. Opportunities for self-selected projects
3. Extensions (e.g., mentorships) in various content areas

---

* Source: Mansfield Public Schools, Mansfield, CT

C. Affective Support

The progress of identified students will be monitored by the enrichment specialist. The person will coordinate services for identified students needing academic or personal counseling in areas such as underachievement, learning disabilities, or other social and emotional areas.

IV. Identification Procedures

A. Screening

Students will be screened in an ongoing fashion for academic ability through the administration of nationally standardized individual or group tests of intellectual ability. Students with a normed score at or above the 95th percentile will be identified for the program. The following additional criteria will also be used to identify high ability students and any of these criteria may result in placement in the program:

1. Standardized achievement tests at or above the 95th percentile in science, social studies, total math, total language, total reading, or the total composite score.
2. Evidence (e.g., performance, teacher recommendation) of the need for extensive curriculum modification in order to provide sufficient challenge.
3. Placement in academic, music, or visual arts contests and inclusion in selective performing groups.
4. Evidence of high ability or special talent outside curricular or talent areas (e.g., leadership).
5. Evidence of high levels of creativity.

Referrals for screening may be made by parents, teachers, students (self or peers) or professionals who are familiar with the student's abilities, potentials, and past records.

A special effort will be made to screen underrepresented populations such as minority students, those who are economically disadvantaged and those for whom English is a second language (ESL) students. These students may be placed even though they may not meet all of the above criteria.

B. Placement

All students meeting the above criteria will be identified for program placement and will receive services through appropriate pacing, schoolwide enrichment, and affective support as described above.

V. Procedural safeguards insuring due process rights for those students who are identified for the program and those who are potential candidates for program services:

A. Parents and teachers may request the administration of an individual assessment for a student without recent ability test scores or for a student for whom a written test may be an inadequate measure of ability.
B. No test scores are released outside the school except to the parent or by the written request of the parent.
C. Recent standardized ability and achievement test scores provided by other school districts will be accepted in accordance with the identification procedures outlined above.

Sample #2: School Board Policy for High Ability Students

All students who are exceptional are entitled to a public-supported education in which instruction is geared to their needs, interests and developmental level.

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Policy Statement on Ability Grouping

The practice of grouping, enabling students with advanced abilities and/or performance to be grouped together to receive appropriately challenging instruction, has recently come under attack. The National Association for Gifted Children wishes to reaffirm the importance of grouping for instruction of gifted students. Grouping allows for more appropriate, rapid, and advanced instruction, which matches the rapidly developing skills and capabilities of gifted students.

Special attention should be given to the identification of gifted and talented students who may not be identified through traditional assessment methods (including economically disadvantaged individuals, individuals of limited English proficiency, and individuals with handicaps), to help them participate effectively in special group programs.

Strong research evidence supports the effectiveness of ability grouping for gifted students in accelerated classes, enrichment programs, advanced placement programs, etc. Ability and performance grouping has been used extensively in programs for musically and artistically gifted students, and for athletically talented students with little argument. Grouping is a necessary component of every graduate and professional preparation program, such as law, medicine, and the sciences. It is an accepted practice that is used extensively in the education programs in almost every country in the western world.

NAGC does not endorse a tracking system that sorts all children into fixed layers in the school system with little attention to particular content, student motivation, past accomplishment, or present potential.

To abandon the proven instructional strategy of grouping students for instruction at a time of educational crisis in the U.S. will further damage our already poor competitive position to provide an appropriate education for all children.

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Policy Statement on Acceleration (approved 11/6/92)

The practice of educational acceleration has long been used to match appropriate learning opportunities with student abilities. The goals of acceleration are to adjust the pace of instruction to the student's capability, to provide an appropriate level of challenge, and to reduce the time period necessary for students to complete traditional schooling. When acceleration has been effective in achieving these goals, highly capable individuals are prepared to begin contributing to society at an earlier age. Although instructional adaptations, such as compacting, telescoping, and curriculum revision, which allow more economic use of time are desirable practices for exceptionally talented students, there are situations in which such modifications are insufficient in fulfilling the academic potential of all highly capable children. Personal acceleration is called for in these cases.

Personal acceleration involves moving a student through the traditional educational organization more quickly and includes such practices as grade skipping, concurrent enrollment in two grades, early entrance into kindergarten or college, credit by examination, combining three years of middle school into two, acceleration in particular content areas, and dual enrollment in high school or college. Students may be accelerated in one discipline or across disciplines.

Research documents the academic benefits and positive outcomes of personal acceleration for carefully selected students. Decisions about the appropriateness of personal acceleration and the extent of acceleration for a given student should include examination of student preferences and disposition relative to the decision, the student's intellectual and academic profile, and social readiness. Other factors which enhance the success of personal acceleration are positive attitudes of teachers, timeliness of the decision, parent support, and the careful monitoring of new placements with a clearly articulated option to return to the earlier setting without penalty.

Opportunities to learn must be offered to all children. Accordingly, highly able students with capability and motivation to succeed in placements beyond traditional age/grade parameters should be provided the opportunity to enroll in intellectually appropriate classes and educational settings.

Collaborative Research Series

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